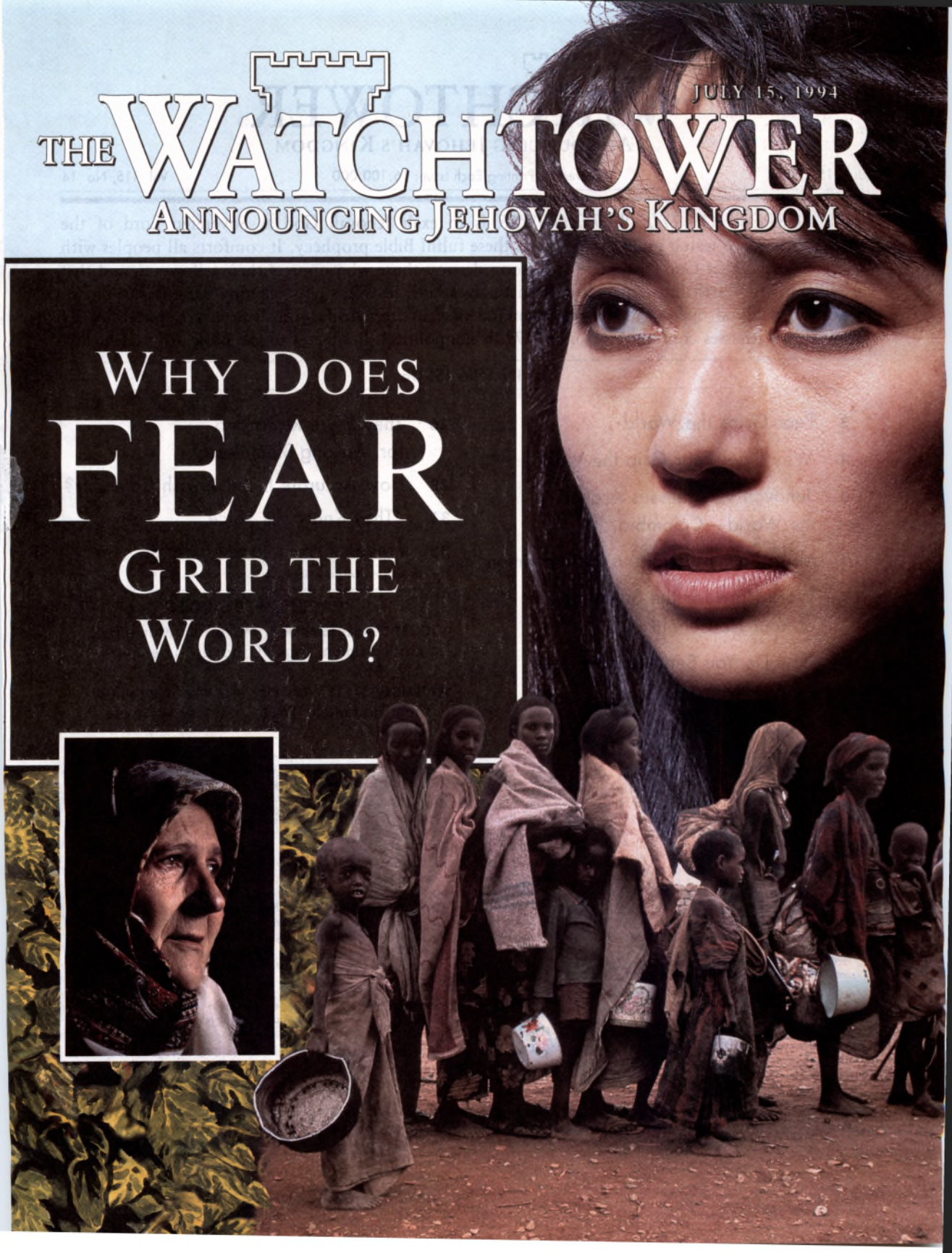
JULY 15, 1994

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

WHY DOES FEAR GRIP THE WORLD?



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

July 15, 1994 | Average Printing Each Issue: 16,100,000 | Vol. 115, No. 14

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 Bible translation used is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References,* unless otherwise indicated.

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Publication of "The Watchtower" is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201-2483. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Watchtower, **Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.**

Printed in U.S.A.

Fear Grips the World

A GIGANTIC car-bomb explosion rocked the 110-story World Trade Center in New York City on February 26, 1993. Thousands of workers were trapped in stalled elevators or had to flee down smoke-filled stairs. They felt the fear that is now rampant in this violent world.

People in many lands have been terrorized by bombs, which have become commonplace in such countries as Ireland and Lebanon. Why, 13 exploded in just one day—March 12, 1993—in Bombay, India, killing some 200 people! An observer said: "There is panic in the whole of Bombay." According to the magazine *Newsweek,* a car bomb's "utter banality only makes it more fearsome."

Bob Strong/Sipa Press

Nuclear Fears Persist

There is fear that nuclear reactors are vulnerable to bombs. A successful attack on a nuclear power plant could cause incalculable damage and suffering. Giving credence to this fear was one man's attempt to crash his car through a security gate at Three Mile Island nuclear power station in the United States.

Many fear that terrorists and power-hungry rulers will acquire nuclear weapons. Some are fearful that thousands of unemployed Soviet nuclear scientists will try to sell their skills. Further, though the START treaty and other accords call for a major reduction of strategic nuclear weapons, implementation of such agreements will not be completed for many years. In the meantime, the possible use of this weaponry by some fanatical upstart must hang like a threatening storm cloud over mankind.

Violence Promotes Fear

The widespread increase in violent crime makes people fearful in their homes and on the streets. An estimated 23,200 Americans were murdered in 1990. In the city of Chicago, for example, an increase in the use of crack cocaine contributed to about 700 murders in one year. Certain areas of some cities have become battlegrounds where passersby, including children, have been killed in cross fire. Says one magazine: "Violence is escalating rapidly in midsize cities. . . . No one is immune as communities across the [United States] are awash with drugs and young hooligans. Each year 1 of every 4 American households experiences a violent crime or theft." —*U.S.News & World Report,* October 7, 1991.

Fear of rape makes women apprehensive. In France reported rapes rose 62 percent from 1985 to 1990. Within six years sexual assaults doubled to 27,000 in Canada. Germany reported one sexual assault on a woman every seven minutes.

Children also fear for their safety. *Newsweek* reports that in the United States,

"kids, even fourth and fifth graders, are arming themselves, and teachers and school officials are running scared." The situation is so serious that a quarter of the large urban school districts use metal detectors, but determined youngsters find a way around these by passing guns to others through windows.

Fear of AIDS

More and more people are fearful of contracting AIDS. There have been over 230,000 cases in the United States alone. AIDS has become the sixth leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds. "The future holds the frightening prospect of much more widespread illness," says *Newsweek*.

Death from AIDS is increasingly frequent among people in the fields of dance, theater, movies, music, fashion, television, art, and the like. One report said that 60 percent of the deaths of Parisian men in journalism, art, and entertainment aged 25 to 44 were due to AIDS. WHO (World Health Organization) reports that from 8 million to 15 million people worldwide are infected with HIV. Dr. Michael Merson, a director of WHO, says: "It is now clear that the toll of HIV infection around the globe is worsening rapidly, especially in developing countries."

Of course, there are also environmental and other fears. Yet, the foregoing reports alone make it evident that fear grips the world. Is there something especially significant about this? Can we ever expect to enjoy freedom from fear?

Why Does Fear Grip the World?

WHO wants to live in fear? The average person desires security, with no threat to his life or possessions. Hence, many move out of crime-ridden areas. Yet, causes for fear exist everywhere.

Dangers from nuclear weapons and reactor accidents arouse fear of devastation for mankind. Skyrocketing violence promotes fear. Many are fearful that AIDS will become the most death-dealing epidemic of the century. Destruction of our environment is among other causes of fear. Are these fears especially significant? And can we ever hope to live in a world without such fear?

Worldwide Fear Significant

Today's widespread fear is significant because of what was foretold in the Bible. In his prophecy about the last days, Jesus Christ cited conditions that would cause fear. He said: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." Jesus also spoke of "the increasing of lawlessness." Since 1914, unparalleled wars, famines, earthquakes, and lawlessness have resulted in great fear and loss of life.—Matthew 24:7-14.

Even the attitudes of people give rise to fear today. At 2 Timothy 3:1-4, we read the

apostle Paul's prophetic words: "In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God." Since we are surrounded by such people in these last days, no wonder there is so much fear!

What This World Can Expect

Jesus compared this period to the last days of the world of Noah's time. Doubtless, fear was then great, for the Bible's historical record says: "The earth came to be ruined in the sight of the true God and the earth became filled with violence." Hence, "God said to Noah: 'The end of all flesh has come before me, because the earth is full of violence.'" (Genesis 6:11, 13) That wicked world was so violent that God put an end to it by means of the global Flood. Out of love, however, Jehovah God preserved righteous Noah and his family.—2 Peter 2:5.

What can the present violent world therefore expect? Well, God detests violent disregard for the welfare of others. This is evident from the psalmist's words: "Jehovah himself examines the righteous one as well as the wicked one, and anyone loving violence His soul certainly hates." (Psalm 11:5) Jehovah brought an end to the violent world of Noah's day. So, then, should we not expect God to bring an end to this world plagued by fear-inspiring violence?

The apostle Peter was divinely inspired to speak of Christ's presence and to prophesy calamity for the present wicked world. He wrote: "In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" Peter then used the term "heavens" to represent the system of imperfect rule over mankind and the word "earth" for unrighteous human society. "For," said he, "according to their wish, this fact escapes their notice, that there were heavens from of old and an earth standing compactly out of water and in the midst of water by the word of God; and by those means the world of that time [Noah's day] suffered destruction when it was deluged with water. But by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men."—2 Peter 3:3-7.

In a similar vein, Paul pointed out that Christ and his powerful angels would bring "vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9) The last book of the Bible speaks of the gathering of the nations for "the war of the great day of God the Almighty" and assures us that Jehovah will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:18; 16:14-16.

A Time for Joy, Not Fear

Instead of being terrified by what the Bible foretells for this world, upright people have reason for joy. Jehovah will soon bring an end to this wicked world, but this will be done for the good of those who love righteousness. What is to follow the divine ending of the present system of things? Why, a new system under the heavenly Kingdom of God, for which Jesus taught his followers

to pray! He said: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.'" (Matthew 6:9, 10) What changes can be expected when God's will is done on earth?

War and its terrors will have ended. Psalm 46:9 says: "He [Jehovah God] is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth. The bow he breaks apart and does cut the spear in pieces; the [war] wagons he burns in the fire." Then the people "will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble."—Micah 4:4.

Deadly diseases will no longer cause fear and claim lives. The divine promise is: "No resident will say: 'I am sick.'" (Isaiah 33:24) What a cause for joy!

Fears associated with crime and violence will also be things of the past. Psalm 37:10, 11 promises: "Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."

How will present-day fears be replaced by true peace and security? By means of one righteous government—God's Kingdom. Regarding our time, Daniel 2:44 states: "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." Jehovah's appointed King, Jesus Christ,

THE POWER OF A SINGLE COPY

TOMASZ, a young man from Poland, ran into legal trouble that caused him to flee the country. For six months he hitchhiked across Europe, sleeping in a tent and working at various jobs. Meanwhile, one question was constantly on his mind: What is the purpose of life?

Tomasz's question was answered when he was given a copy of *The Watchtower* in Polish. He read it several times and recognized that this magazine contained the truth he had been looking for. Tomasz hitchhiked 120 miles to the Watch Tower branch office in Selters/Taunus, Germany. Arriving on a Monday evening, he held out his *Watchtower* magazine and said: "I would like someone to explain more about what is in this magazine. What do I need to do?"

That evening, two of Jehovah's Witnesses talked to Tomasz about the purpose of life, using the Bible as a basis for their conversation. Eager to learn more, Tomasz returned to the branch office every day that week, studying the Bible and the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*.

Tomasz decided to return to Poland, though he could face problems there. Thus, on Friday, just four days after arriving at the Selters branch office, Tomasz set off for his homeland. He immediately began studying with Jehovah's Witnesses in Poland. Tomasz made rapid progress and zealously began talking to others about what he was learning. In October 1993, only four months after his initial visit to Selters, he was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Just one copy of *The Watchtower* helped this young man to investigate the purpose of life!

Under Kingdom rule by Jesus Christ, never again will fear grip the world

'must rule until God has put all enemies under his feet.' (1 Corinthians 15:25) Jesus' Thousand Year Reign will fulfill God's original purpose to have a paradise earth inhabited eternally by joyful humans.—Luke 23:43; Revelation 20:6; 21:1-5.

In that Paradise earth, there will be one wholesome fear. It will be "the fear of Jehovah." (Proverbs 1:7) In fact, we should have this fear even now, for it is profound reverence and awe coupled with a dread of displeasing God because we appreciate his loving-kindness and goodness. This fear calls for implicit trust in Jehovah and faithful obedience to him.—Psalm 2:11; 115:11.

Fearsome events mark these as the last days. If we prove our love for God, however, we can rejoice instead of being fearful. Bible prophecies show that the divine termination of this world is at hand. It will be replaced by Jehovah God's promised new world of righteousness. (2 Peter 3:13) Indeed, under Kingdom rule there will soon be a world without unwholesome fear.

Jehovah's Witnesses Around the World

COLOMBIA is a unique South American land. Both the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans hug the coastline of this volcano-decked country. The heat of low tropical shorelines and plains yields to the cold of the high, snowcapped peaks of the Andes Mountains.*

Though Colombia is noted for gold and emeralds, the people are its most precious assets. Today, Jehovah is filling his spiritual house with glory. Beautiful, desirable worshipers are streaming to it in all parts of the earth, including Colombia. —Haggai 2:7.

Business Executives Impressed

Sunday, November 1, 1992, marked the dedication of the Watch Tower Society's new branch office and printing facility at Facatativá, 26 miles northwest of Bogotá. Tours of the branch have had a great impact on visitors. Upon returning to the factory where he works, one visitor excitedly urged his managers to go and observe an organization that is 'a wonder of efficiency, order, and employee morale.' During their subsequent tour, the executives showed intense interest and asked many questions.

These executives wanted to send their superintendents, supervisors, and foremen—in fact, all their workers—on tour. Each week, they would schedule from 15 to 25 employees for tours until the whole work force of 1,300 could observe such organizational efficiency.

Hundreds of their workers have toured the branch facilities and have watched the video *Jehovah's Witnesses—The Organization Behind the Name*. Impressed by the magnitude of the organization and the worldwide scope of the Kingdom-preaching work, they marvel at the high level of the technology used in the Society's operations. Upon leaving, many are heard to say that they feel as though they were 'leaving Paradise to go back into a disorganized world.'

The Truth Reaches All Kinds

People of all kinds are being reached with the good news. (1 Timothy 2:3, 4) For example, a former composer and leader of a heavy-metal rock band accepted Bible truth, made changes in his life, and soon became a regular pioneer. Later he was appointed a ministerial servant. Several individuals who were members of subversive groups have learned to put their confidence and hope in Jehovah's Kingdom. They are now actively involved in preaching the message of a peaceful new world.

Drug addicts and dealers have also turned to the truth. One young man who is now a Witness had managed a drug plantation and a cocaine laboratory in the jungle for five years before he broke away from that kind of life. He has found happiness in learning and practicing Bible principles. In a penitentiary convicted assassins moved by a sincere study of the Bible are earnestly praying that Jehovah forgive their sins and accept them as his servants.

So it is that people of all kinds are responding to the Kingdom message. In Colombia, as elsewhere, Jehovah is thus filling his house with glory.

COUNTRY PROFILE
1993 Service Year

PEAK NUMBER WITNESSING:
60,854

RATIO:
1 Witness to 558

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE:
249,271

AVERAGE PIONEER PUBLISHERS:
8,487

AVERAGE BIBLE STUDIES:
100,927

NUMBER BAPTIZED:
5,183

NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS:
751

BRANCH OFFICE:
FACATATIVÁ

* For additional information, see the *1994 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses*.

COLOMBIA

Branch office personnel and missionaries in 1956

Aerial view of branch office

MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE A LASTING UNION

"What God has yoked together let no man put apart."—MATTHEW 19:6.

MANY thousands among Jehovah's people today enjoy satisfying and enduring marriages. Such widespread success, however, is hardly an accident. Christian marriages flourish when both mates (1) respect God's view of wedlock and (2) endeavor to live by the principles of his Word. After all, it was God himself who instituted the marital arrangement. He is the One 'to whom every family on earth owes its name.' (Ephesians 3:14, 15) Since Jehovah knows what it takes to make a success of marriage, we benefit ourselves by following his guidance.—Isaiah 48:17.

1. What is the basis for marital success among true Christians today?

2 Conversely, a failure to apply Bible principles can result in marital misery. Some experts believe that as many as two thirds of those getting married today in the United States will eventually obtain a divorce. Even Christians are not immune to the stresses and strains of these "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) Economic tensions and the pressures of the workplace can take their toll on any marriage. Some Christians have also been bit-

2. What are the consequences of failing to apply Bible principles in marriage?

terly disappointed by the failure of their mates to apply Bible principles. "I love Jehovah," says one Christian wife, "but my marriage has been a mess for 20 years. My husband is selfish and does not want to make any changes. I feel trapped." More than a few Christian husbands or wives have expressed similar sentiments. What goes wrong? And what can prevent a marriage from drifting into cold indifference or outright hostility?

The Permanence of Marriage

[3] Even under the best of circumstances, marriage is a union of imperfect individuals. (Deuteronomy 32:5) The apostle Paul thus said that "those who do [marry] will have tribulation in their flesh." (1 Corinthians 7:28) Some extreme circumstances may even result in separation or divorce. (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:12-15) In most cases, however, Christians apply Paul's counsel: "A wife should not depart from her husband . . . , and a husband should not leave his wife." (1 Corinthians 7:10, 11) Indeed, marriage was meant to be a permanent bond, for Jesus Christ declared: "What God has yoked together let no man put apart."—Matthew 19:6.

[4] To someone who feels trapped in a hostile or loveless marriage, Jehovah's standard may seem harsh and unreasonable. But it is not. The permanence of the marital bond moves a godly couple to confront and seek to solve their problems, rather than beat a hasty retreat from their obligations at the first sign of trouble. One man who had been married for more than 20 years put it like this: "You can't avoid troubled times. You're not going to be happy with each other all the time. That's when commitment is really important." Of course, Christian married couples feel a primary obligation to Jehovah God, the Originator of marriage.—Compare Ecclesiastes 5:4.

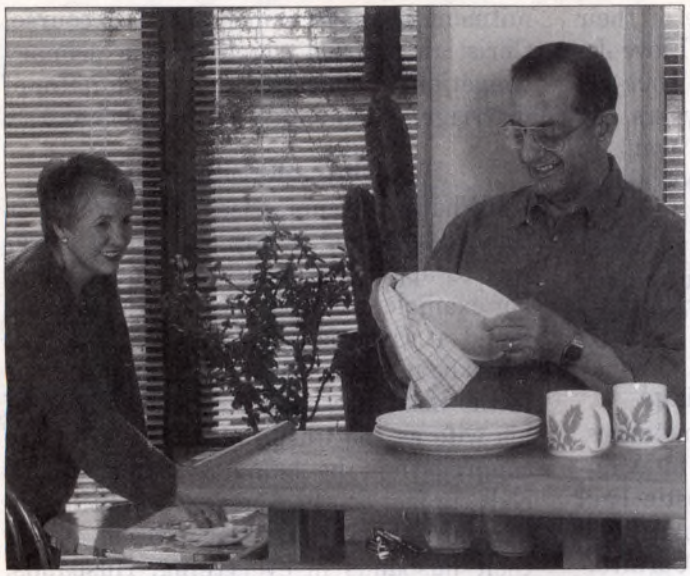
3, 4. (a) What is God's standard for marriage? (b) Why is the permanence of marriage just and beneficial?

Headship and Submission

[5] When problems arise, therefore, it is time to seek, not a way out, but a better way to apply the counsel of God's Word. For example, consider these words of Paul, found at Ephesians 5:22-25, 28, 29: "Let wives be in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord, because a husband is head of his wife as the Christ also is head of the congregation, he being a savior of this body. In fact, as the congregation is in subjection to the Christ, so let wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it. In this way husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no man ever hated his own flesh; but he feeds and cherishes it, as the Christ also does the congregation."

[6] Men have often abused their husbandly authority and dominated their wives. (Genesis 3:16) However, Paul urged Christian husbands to be different from men of the world, to be Christlike, not tyrants controlling every detail of their wives' existence. Certainly, the man Jesus Christ was never harsh or domineering. He treated his followers with honor and respect, saying: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart."—Matthew 11:28, 29.

5. What is some of Paul's counsel for husbands and wives?
6. How are Christian husbands to be different from men of the world?



If his wife must work secularly, a Christian husband will not allow her to be overburdened

[7] A Christian husband assigns honor to his wife as to a weaker vessel. (1 Peter 3:7) For example, suppose she has to work at a secular job. He will take this into account, being as helpful and considerate as possible. One major reason women have given for divorce is their husband's neglect of the children or the home. Therefore, a Christian husband seeks to be of help to her at home in meaningful ways that benefit the entire family.

[8] Being treated with honor makes it easier for Christian wives to be in subjection to their husbands. This does not mean abject slavery, however. God decreed that a wife was to be, not a slave, but a "complement" ("counterpart," footnote), denoting something fitting for the man. (Genesis 2:18) At Malachi 2:14, a wife is spoken of as a man's "partner." As such, wives in Bible times enjoyed considerable freedom and latitude.

Concerning the "capable wife," the Bible says: "In her the heart of her owner has put trust." Indeed, she was entrusted with such matters as the general managing of the household, supervising the purchase of food, negotiating real-estate transactions, and managing a small business.—Proverbs 31:10-31.

[9] Nevertheless, the God-fearing wife recognized her husband's authority. For example, Sarah "used to obey Abraham, calling him 'lord,'" not as a polite formality, but as a sincere reflection of her submissiveness. (1 Peter 3:6; Genesis 18:12) She also willingly left behind her comfortable home in the city of Ur in order to dwell in tents with her husband. (Hebrews 11:8, 9) But submission did not mean that a wife could not take responsible action when necessary. When Moses failed to comply with God's law on circumcision, his wife, Zipporah, forestalled disaster by acting decisively. (Exodus 4:24-26) More is at stake than pleasing an imperfect man. Wives must be "in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:22) When a Christian wife thinks in terms of her relationship with God, this helps her to overlook minor flaws and inadequacies in her husband, even as he needs to do in dealing with her.

7. How can a man assign honor to his wife when she has to work secularly?
8. What does subjection entail for Christian wives?
9. (a) How did God-fearing women in Bible times manifest true submissiveness? (b) What can help a Christian wife remain submissive today?

Communication —Lifeblood of a Marriage

[10] When asked what was the single biggest reason couples split up, a divorce attorney answered: "The inability to talk honestly with each other, bare their souls and treat each other as their best friend." Yes, communication is the lifeblood of a strong marriage. As the Bible says, "there is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk." (Proverbs 15:22) Husbands and wives need to be 'confidential friends,' enjoying a warm, intimate relationship. (Proverbs 2:17) Yet, many couples flounder when it comes to communication, and thus resentment festers until an eruption of destructive anger occurs. Or marriage mates may hide behind a thin veneer of civility, emotionally distancing themselves from each other.

[11] Part of the problem seems to be that men and women often have different communication styles. Most women seem comfortable discussing feelings, whereas men generally seem to prefer discussing facts. Women are more inclined to show empathy and give emotional support, while men tend to seek and offer solutions. Still, the potential for good communication exists where both mates are determined to be "swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath." (James 1:19) Make eye contact and really pay attention. Draw each other out with considerate questions. (Compare 1 Samuel 1:8; Proverbs 20:5.) Instead of trying to offer a quick solution when your mate reveals a problem, listen carefully as you work to resolve matters. And humbly pray together, seeking divine guidance. —Psalm 65:2; Romans 12:12.

10. How important is communication to a marriage?
11. How can communication between husband and wife be improved?

[12] Sometimes the stresses and strains of life seem to leave marriage mates with little time or energy for meaningful talk. However, if Christians are to keep their marriage honorable and safeguard it against defilement, they must remain close to each other. They need to treat their union as something precious, valuable, and must buy out time for it and for each other. (Compare Colossians 4:5.) In some cases the solution to finding time for wholesome talk may be as simple as switching off the TV. Regularly sharing a cup of tea or coffee can help marriage partners to keep in touch emotionally. On such occasions they can 'consult together' on various family matters. (Proverbs 13:10) And how wise it is to develop the habit of talking over minor irritations and misunderstandings before they become major sources of tension!—Compare Matthew 5:23, 24; Ephesians 4:26.

[13] Confessed one man: "It's hard for me, quite often, to really speak my mind and really tell [my wife] just exactly the way I feel." Self-disclosure, though, is an important key to developing intimacy. Note how open and honest Jesus was with the prospective members of his bride class. He said: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, because all the things I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15) So view your spouse as a friend. Trust your mate with your feelings. Make an effort to make simple, honest "expressions of endearment." (Song of Solomon 1:2) Open communication may at times seem awkward,

12. How can Christian mates buy out time for each other?
13. (a) What example did Jesus set in openness and honesty? (b) What are some ways in which marriage mates can draw close to each other?

but when both marriage mates put forth adequate effort, much will be achieved toward making their marriage a lasting union.

Handling Disagreements

[14] Honest disagreements are sure to arise from time to time. But your home need not degenerate into a 'house full of quarreling.' (Proverbs 17:1) Be careful not to discuss sensitive matters when the children might hear, and show consideration for your mate's feelings. When Rachel expressed distress over her barren state and asked Jacob to give her children, he angrily responded: "Am I in the place of God, who has held back the fruit of the belly from you?" (Genesis 30:1, 2) If domestic difficulties arise, attack the problem, not the person. During a private discussion, avoid "speaking thoughtlessly" or needlessly interrupting each other.—Proverbs 12:18.

[15] True, you may have strong feelings about your point of view, but these can be expressed without "malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech." (Ephesians 4:31) "Discuss your problems in a normal voice," says one husband. "If a voice is raised, stop. Return after a short period of time. Start again." Proverbs 17:14 gives this good advice: "Before the quarrel has burst forth, take your leave." Try discussing matters again when both of you have cooled off.

14, 15. How can quarreling be avoided?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Why should marriage be a permanent bond?
- ☐ What is the Biblical view of headship and submission?
- ☐ How can married couples improve communication?
- ☐ How can couples handle disagreements in a Christian manner?
- ☐ What will help to strengthen the marriage bond?

Stay Faithful to Each Other

[16] Hebrews 13:4 states: "Let marriage be honorable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers." Adultery is a sin against God. It also wreaks havoc on a marriage. (Genesis 39:9) Writes one marriage counselor: "Once discovered, adultery hits a whole family like a massive hurricane, smashing homes, shattering trust and self-esteem, battering the young." Pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease may also result.

[17] Some people nurture adulterous leanings by absorbing the world's corrupted view of sex as portrayed in books, on television, and in movies. (Galatians 6:8) Researchers say, though, that adultery usually results not simply from a desire for sex but from a perceived need to prove that one is still attractive or from a desire to feel more loved. (Compare Proverbs 7:18.) Whatever the reason, a Christian must reject immoral fantasies. Honestly discuss your feelings with your mate. If necessary, seek help from congregation elders. Doing so may very well prevent a fall into sin. Moreover, Christians need to be cautious in dealing with members of the opposite sex. It would be contrary to Scriptural principles to be married to one person but to look with passion on another. (Job 31:1; Matthew 5:28) Chris-

16. Why is adulterous such a serious matter?
17. How can adulterous leanings be avoided or rejected?

tians should be especially careful about developing emotional attachments with workmates. Keep such relationships cordial but businesslike.

[18] An even greater safeguard is a warm, open relationship with one's mate. Many researchers say that sexual problems in marriage are rarely physical in nature but are usually by-products of poor communication. Problems along these lines are rare when a couple communicates openly and renders the marital due as an expression of love rather than as a duty.* Under such proper circumstances, intimate relations can serve to strengthen the marriage bond.—1 Corinthians 7:2-5; 10:24.

[19] It is love that is "a perfect bond of union" within the Christian congregation. By cultivating love, a godly married couple can 'continue putting up with each other and forgiving each other freely.' (Colossians 3:13, 14) Principled love seeks the welfare of others. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) Cultivate such love. It will help you to strengthen your marriage bond. Apply Bible principles in your married life. If you do that, your marriage will prove to be a lasting union and will bring praise and honor to Jehovah God.

* The article "Communication—More Than Just Talk," appearing in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1993, showed how couples can overcome problems in this area.

18. What is often at the root of sexual problems in a marriage, and how can these be resolved?

19. What is "a perfect bond of union," and what effect can it have on a marriage?

WORK HARD FOR THE SALVATION OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD

"Go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."
—EPHESIANS 6:4.

A POPULAR magazine called it a revolution. This was in an article that described the startling changes that have taken place in the family in recent years. These were said to be "the result of an epidemic of divorce, remarriage, redivorce, illegitimacy, and new strains within intact families." Such stresses and strains are not surprising, for the Bible predicted that people would face "critical times" during these "last days."—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

[2] Parents today therefore face challenges unknown to previous generations. Although some parents among us have raised

1, 2. What challenges face parents today?

A father's love and approval are important to a child's emotional development

their children in godly ways "from infancy," many families have just recently begun "walking in the truth." (2 Timothy 3:15; 3 John 4) Their children may have been older when the parents began to teach them God's ways. Furthermore, an increasing number of single-parent families and stepfamilies are found in our midst. Whatever your circumstances, the apostle Paul's admonition applies: "Go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Ephesians 6:4.

Christian Parents and Their Roles

[3] Note that Paul addressed his words at Ephesians 6:4 primarily to "fathers." One writer explains that in previous generations "fathers were responsible for their children's moral and spiritual upbringing; fathers were responsible for their children's education. . . . But the Industrial Revolution stripped away this intimacy; fathers left their farms and stores, left their homes to work in factories and later in offices. Mothers assumed many of the duties for which fathers were once responsible. Increasingly, fatherhood became an abstraction."

[4] Christian men: Do not be content to be mere breadwinners, leaving all the training and nurturing of your children to your wives. Proverbs 24:27 urged fathers of ancient times: "Prepare your work out of doors, and make it ready for yourself in the field. Afterward you must also build up your household." Likewise today, as a working man, you may need to labor long and hard at making a living. (1 Timothy 5:8) Afterward, however, please take the time to "build up your household"—emotionally and spiritually.

[5] Christian wives: You too must work hard for the salvation of your households. Proverbs 14:1 says: "The truly wise woman has built up her house." As marriage part-

3, 4. (a) What factors have caused the role of fathers to diminish? (b) Why must Christian fathers be more than breadwinners?

5. How can Christian wives work for the salvation of their households?

ners, you and your husband share the responsibility of training your offspring. (Proverbs 22:6; Malachi 2:14) This may involve disciplining your children, getting them ready for Christian meetings and field ministry, or even conducting the family study when your husband is not able to do so. You can also do much to teach your children household skills, good manners, physical hygiene, and many other helpful things. (Titus 2:5) When husbands and wives work together in this way, they can better meet the needs of their children. Just what are some of those needs?

Caring for Their Emotional Needs

[6] "When a nursing mother cherishes her own children," they feel safe, secure, loved. (1 Thessalonians 2:7; Psalm 22:9) Few mothers can resist the urge to lavish attention on their infants. Asked the prophet Isaiah: "Can a wife forget her suckling so that she should not pity the son of her belly?" (Isaiah 49:15) Mothers thus play an important role in the emotional development of children. Nevertheless, fathers also play an important role in this regard. Family educator Paul Lewis says: "I've never had a single case worker who has ever had a [delinquent] kid report a healthy relationship with their dad. Not one out of hundreds."

[7] It is therefore essential that Christian fathers carefully cultivate a loving bond with their children. For example, consider Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. At Jesus' baptism, Jehovah declared: "You are my Son, the beloved; I have approved you." (Luke 3:22) So much is expressed in those few words! Jehovah (1) acknowledged his Son, (2) openly expressed his love for Jesus, and (3) made known his approval of Jesus. Yet, this was not the only time Jehovah expressed his love for his Son. Jesus later said to his Father: "You loved me before the founding of the world." (John 17:24) Really, though, do not all obedient sons and daughters need acknowledgment, love, and approval from their fathers?

[8] If you are a father, likely you can do much to forge a loving bond with your children by regularly making proper physical and verbal expressions of love. Granted, it is difficult for some men to show their affection, especially if they have never received open affection from their own fathers. But even an awkward attempt to express love to your children can have a powerful impact. After all, "love builds up." (1 Corinthians 8:1) If your children feel secure because of your fatherly love, they will be more inclined to be 'real sons and daughters' and to feel free to confide in you. —Proverbs 4:3.

Caring for Their Spiritual Needs

[9] Children also have spiritual needs. (Matthew 5:3) Moses exhorted Israelite parents: "These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son 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." (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) If you are a Christian parent, you can do much of your instructing informally, as "when you walk on the road." Time spent riding together in the

6. What roles do mothers and fathers play in the emotional development of their children?

7, 8. (a) What evidence is there of a strong bond between Jehovah God and his Son? (b) How can fathers forge a loving bond with their children?

9. (a) How did God-fearing Israelite parents care for the spiritual needs of their families? (b) What opportunities do Christians have to teach their children informally?

family car, shopping, or walking together with your children from door-to-door in the Christian ministry provides wholesome opportunities to impart instruction in a relaxed setting. Mealtimes are an especially good time for families to converse. "We use mealtime to talk about things that came up during the day," explains one parent.

[10] However, formal instruction by means of a regular Bible study with your children is also vital. Admittedly, "foolishness is tied up with the heart" of children. (Proverbs 22:15) Some parents say that their children can easily sabotage the family study. How? By acting restless and bored, by creating irritating distractions (such as fights with siblings), or by feigning ignorance of basic Bible truths. If this goes to the point of becoming a battle of wills, a parent's will must be the strongest. Christian parents must not give up and let children dominate the household.—Compare Galatians 6:9.

[11] If your children do not enjoy the family study, perhaps some changes can be made. For example, is the study used as an excuse to review your children's latest shortcomings? Perhaps it would be best to discuss such problems privately. Is your study held regularly? If you cancel it for a favorite television show or sports event, likely your children will not take the study very seriously. Are you earnest and enthusiastic in your manner of conducting the study? (Romans 12:8) Yes, study should be enjoyable. Try to keep all the children involved. Be positive and upbuilding, warmly commending your children for their participation. Do not simply cover material, of course, but try to reach hearts.—Proverbs 23:15.

10. Why is family study sometimes a challenge, and what determination must parents have?
11. How can family study be made enjoyable?

Disciplining in Righteousness

[12] Children also have a strong need for discipline. As a parent, you should set limits for them. Says Proverbs 13:24: "The one holding back his rod is hating his son, but the one loving him is he that does look for him with discipline." The Bible does not mean, however, that discipline must always be delivered at the end of a strap. Proverbs 8:33 states: "*Listen* to discipline," and we are told that "a rebuke works deeper in one having understanding than striking a stupid one a hundred times."—Proverbs 17:10.

[13] On occasion, some physical discipline may be appropriate. If carried out in anger, however, it is likely to be excessive and ineffectual. The Bible cautions: "You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted." (Colossians 3:21) Indeed, "mere oppression may make a wise one act crazy." (Ecclesiastes 7:7) An embittered youth can even rebel against righteous standards. Parents should thus use the Scriptures to discipline their children in righteousness in a firm though balanced way. (2 Timothy 3:16) Godly discipline is administered with love and mildness.—Compare 2 Timothy 2:24, 25.*

[14] Of course, "we all stumble many times." (James 3:2) Even a normally loving parent can succumb to the pressure of the moment and say something unkind or make a display of wrath. (Colossians 3:8) If that should occur, do not let the sun set with

* See the article "The Bible's Viewpoint: 'The Rod of Discipline'—Is It Out-of-Date?" in *Awake!* of September 8, 1992.

12. Why does discipline not always involve physical punishment?
13. How should child discipline be administered?
14. What should parents do if they feel inclined to give in to rage?

your child in great distress or with you yourself in a provoked state. (Ephesians 4:26, 27) Settle matters with your child, offering an apology if that seems appropriate. (Compare Matthew 5:23, 24.) Displaying such humility may draw you and your child closer together. If you feel that you cannot control your spirit and will give in to rage, seek help from the appointed congregation elders.

Single-Parent Households and Stepfamilies

15 Not all children, though, have the support of two parents. In the United States, 1 child out of 4 is being raised by a single parent. 'Fatherless boys' were common in Bible times, and concern for them is repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures. (Exodus 22:22) Today, single-parent Christian households likewise face pressures and difficulties, but they take comfort in knowing that Jehovah is "a father of fatherless boys and a judge of widows." (Psalm 68:5) Christians are urged to "look after orphans and widows in their tribulation." (James 1:27) Fellow believers can do much to help single-parent families.*

16 If you are a single parent, what can you yourself do to benefit your household? You need to be diligent about family Bible study, meeting attendance, and the field ministry. Discipline, though, may be a particularly difficult challenge. Perhaps you are still grieving over the loss of a beloved mate in death. Or you may be wrestling with feelings of guilt or anger over a marital breakup. If there is shared custody, you may even fear that your child may prefer being with your separated or divorced mate. Such situations may make it emotionally difficult to administer balanced discipline. However, the Bible tells us that "a boy let on the loose will be causing his mother shame." (Proverbs 29:15) So do not give in to guilt, remorse, or emotional pressure by a former marriage mate. Set reasonable and consistent standards. Do not compromise Bible principles.—Proverbs 13:24.

17 Difficulties can arise, though, if a single mother treats her son as a surrogate spouse—the man of the house—or her daughter as a confidante, burdening her with intimate problems. Doing so is inappropriate and confusing to a child. When the roles of parent and child become blurred, discipline can break down. Let it be known that *you* are the parent. If you are a mother in need of Bible-based advice, seek it from the elders or perhaps from a mature older sister.—Compare Titus 2:3-5.

18 Stepfamilies likewise face challenges. Frequently, stepparents find that "instant love" is rare. For example, stepchildren may be quite sensitive to any seeming favoritism toward biological children. (Compare Genesis 37:3, 4.) In fact, stepchildren may be grappling with grief for the departed parent and fear that loving a stepparent would somehow be disloyal to their biological father or mother. Attempts to give needed discipline may be met with a fierce reminder, 'You're not my real parent!'

19 Proverbs 24:3 says: "By wisdom a

* See *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1980, pages 15-26.

15. How can children in single-parent families be helped?
16. (a) What should single parents do in behalf of their own households? (b) Why may discipline be difficult, but why must it be administered?
17. How could the roles of family members become blurred in a single-parent household, and what can be done to prevent this?
18, 19. (a) What are some challenges faced by stepfamilies? (b) How can parents and children in a stepfamily show wisdom and discernment?

household will be built up, and by discernment it will prove firmly established." Yes, it takes wisdom and discernment on the part of all for a stepfamily to succeed. In time, children must accept the often painful fact that things have changed. Stepparents may likewise need to learn to be patient and compassionate, not hurriedly becoming offended when faced with seeming rejection. (Proverbs 19:11; Ecclesiastes 7:9) Before assuming the role of disciplinarian, work at establishing a friendship with a stepchild. Until such a bond is established, some may consider it better to allow the biological parent to carry out discipline. When tensions arise, efforts must be made to communicate. "With those consulting together there is wisdom," says Proverbs 13:10.*

Keep On Working for the Salvation of Your Household!

[20] Strong Christian families are no accident. You family heads must continue to work hard for the salvation of your households. Be vigilant, noting unhealthy traits or worldly tendencies. Set a good example in speaking, conduct, love, faith, and chasteness. (1 Timothy 4:12) Manifest the fruitage of God's spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Patience, consideration, forgiveness, and tenderness will reinforce your efforts to teach your children God's ways.—Colossians 3:12-14.

[21] With God's help, try to maintain a happy, warm spirit within your home. Spend time together as a family, striving to eat at least one meal together each day. Christian meetings, field service, and family study are essential. Yet, there is also "a time to laugh . . . and a time to skip about." (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4) Yes, schedule periods of upbuilding recreation. Visits to museums, zoos, and similar places are enjoyable for the whole family. Or you might turn off the TV and spend time singing, listening to music, playing games, and talking. This can help the family to draw closer together.

[22] May all of you Christian parents continue working to please Jehovah fully "as you go on bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the accurate knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:10) Build your household upon a strong foundation of obedience to God's Word. (Matthew 7:24-27) And be assured that your efforts to raise your children "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah" will have his approval.—Ephesians 6:4.

* See *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1984, pages 21-5.

20. What should Christian family heads continue to do?

21. How can a warm, happy atmosphere be maintained in one's home?

22. Why should you work hard for the salvation of your household?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ How can husband and wife cooperate in building up their household?
- ☐ What are some emotional needs of children, and how can these be met?
- ☐ How can family heads teach their children both formally and informally?
- ☐ How can parents discipline in righteousness?
- ☐ What can be done for the benefit of single-parent families and stepfamilies?

How Do *You* Settle Differences?

A clumsy movement—and the third in a row of five china elephants fell from the mantel. The piece will have to be restored. Otherwise, the harmony of the entire set will be lost. However, the process is delicate, and you do not feel qualified. You will have to seek advice or even ask a specialist to do the work.

HARMONY between spiritual brothers and sisters is much more precious than mere ornaments. The psalmist appropriately sang: "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) Settling a difference with a fellow Christian can sometimes be a delicate matter. Moreover, some do not go about this in the right way. Often the "restoration" is unnecessarily painful or is not very sound, leaving unsightly telltale marks.

Some Christians unnecessarily seek to involve appointed elders in matters that they could handle themselves. This may be so because they are not sure what to do. "Many of our brothers don't know *how* to apply Bible counsel to settle their differences," commented one brother experienced in giving Bible counsel. "Very often," he continued, "they do not follow Jesus' way of doing things." So, what did Jesus actually say about *how* a Christian should settle differences with his brother? Why is it vital to become well acquainted with this counsel and to learn how to apply it?

Minor Differences

"If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift."—Matthew 5:23, 24.

When Jesus spoke those words, the Jews customarily offered sacrifices, or presented gifts, at the temple altar in Jerusalem. If a Jew had wronged a fellow Israelite, the offender could offer up a whole burnt offering or a sin offering. The example related by Jesus comes at the most critical point. When the person is at the altar and is about to offer up his gift to God, he recalls that his brother has something against him. Yes, the Israelite needed to understand that reconciling with his brother should take precedence over performing such a religious duty.

Although such offerings were a requirement of the Mosaic Law, they in themselves did not have the greatest value in God's eyes. The prophet Samuel said to unfaithful King Saul: "Does Jehovah have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Look! To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams."—1 Samuel 15:22.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeated this order of priority and showed his disciples that they must settle their differences before making their offerings. Today, the offerings required of Christians are of

a spiritual nature—"a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." (Hebrews 13:15) Nevertheless, the principle remains valid. The apostle John similarly shows that it would be in vain for someone to claim to love God if he hates his brother.—1 John 4: 20, 21.

Interestingly, the person who remembers that his brother has something against him is to take the first step. The humility that he thus manifests will probably produce good results. Likely, a person who has been offended will not refuse to cooperate with someone who comes to him acknowledging his own faults. The Mosaic Law stipulated that anything taken wrongfully had to be restored completely and an additional fifth had to be added to it. (Leviticus 6:5) Restoring peaceful, harmonious relations will similarly be made easier if the offender shows his desire to go further than what is required, in the strictest sense of the word, to repair any damage he may have caused.

However, attempts to restore peaceful relations are not always successful. The book of Proverbs reminds us that it is difficult to settle differences with someone who finds it hard to respond. Proverbs 18:19 says: "A brother who is transgressed against is more than a strong town; and there are contentions that are like the bar of a dwelling tower." Another translation reads: "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: And their contentions are like the bars of a castle." (*The Englishman's Bible*) Eventually, however, sincere and humble efforts are likely to succeed in the case of fellow believers who desire to please God. But where gross sin is alleged, the counsel of Jesus recorded in Matthew chapter 18 needs to be applied.

Settling Serious Differences

"Moreover, if your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two more, in order that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter may be established. If he does not listen to them, speak to the congregation. If he does not listen even to the congregation, let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector."—Matthew 18:15-17.

What if a Jew (or later, a Christian) encountered serious difficulties with a fellow worshiper of Jehovah? The one who thought that he had been sinned against was to take the first step. He was to discuss matters with the offender in private. By not trying to muster support for his side of the picture, he would surely be more likely to gain his brother, especially if there had been only a misunderstanding that could be cleared up quickly. Everything would be settled more easily if those directly involved were the only ones who knew about the matter.

However, the first step might not suffice. To deal with that situation, Jesus said: *"Take along . . . one or two more."* These could very well be firsthand witnesses. Perhaps they had heard one of the individuals slander the other, or maybe those taken along had been witnesses to a written agreement about which the two parties now disagree. On the other hand, those taken along could become witnesses when any elements, such as written or oral testimonies, are developed to establish the reason for the problem. Here again, only the smallest number possible—"one or two more"—should know about the matter. This would prevent things from getting worse if the matter was only a misunderstanding.

Christians can settle their differences by following Jesus' counsel

What motives should the offended person have? Should he try to humiliate his fellow Christian and want him to grovel? In view of Jesus' counsel, Christians should not be quick to condemn their brothers. If the transgressor recognizes his fault, apologizes, and tries to rectify matters, the one sinned against will have 'gained his brother.'—Matthew 18:15.

If the matter could not be settled, it was to be taken to the congregation. Initially, this meant the elders of the Jews but later, the elders of the Christian congregation. The unrepentant wrongdoer may have to be expelled from the congregation. That is what is meant by considering him "just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector," individuals from whom the Jews kept their distance. This serious measure could not be taken by any Christian individually. The appointed elders, who represent the congregation, are the only ones authorized to take such action.—Compare 1 Corinthians 5:13.

The possibility of an unrepentant wrongdoer being disfellowshipped shows that Matthew 18:15-17 does not pertain to minor differences. Jesus was referring to serious offenses, yet of the type that might be settled between just the two individuals concerned. For example, the offense might be slander, seriously affecting the victim's reputation. Or it might pertain to financial matters, for succeeding verses contain Jesus' illustration of the merciless slave who had been forgiven a great debt. (Matthew 18:23-35) A loan not repaid in the allotted time might be just a passing difficulty that could easily be resolved between the two individuals. But it could become a serious sin, namely, theft, if the borrower obstinately refused to repay what was owed.

Other sins cannot be settled simply between two Christians. Under the Mosaic Law, serious sins were to be reported. (Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 29:24) Similarly, gross sins involving the purity of the congregation have to be reported to Christian elders.

However, most cases of friction between Christians do not come under this procedure.

Could You Just Forgive?

Right after Jesus explained how to settle serious differences, he taught another important lesson. We read: "Then Peter came up and said to him: 'Lord, how many times

is my brother to sin against me and am I to forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him: 'I say to you, not, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy-seven times.'" (Matthew 18:21, 22) On another occasion Jesus told his disciples to forgive "seven times a day." (Luke 17:3, 4) Clearly, then, Christ's followers are called upon to settle differences by freely forgiving one another.

This is an area that needs considerable effort. "Some brothers simply don't know how to forgive," said the individual quoted at the outset. He added: "They seem surprised when someone explains that they can choose to forgive, first and foremost in order to preserve the peace in the Christian congregation."

The apostle Paul wrote: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also." (Colossians 3:13) Before going to a brother who may have offended us, therefore, it would be good to ponder the following questions: Is the offense worth speaking to him about? Is it really impossible for me to let bygones be bygones in the true spirit of Christianity? If I were in his place, would I not want to be forgiven? And if I choose not to forgive, can I expect God to answer my prayers and forgive me? (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15) Such questions may well help us to be forgiving.

As Christians, one of our important responsibilities is to preserve peace in the congregation of Jehovah's people. Therefore, let us put Jesus' counsel into practice. This will help us to forgive freely. Such a forgiving spirit will contribute to the brotherly love that is the identifying mark of Jesus' disciples.—John 13:34, 35.

ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 1, 1994

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 1, 1994, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:30 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The members of the Corporation should inform the Secretary's Office now of any change in their mailing addresses during the past year so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them during July.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual meeting, are to be returned so as to reach the Office of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 1. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and reports, will be concluded by 1:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. Because of limited space, admission will be by ticket only. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone lines to other auditoriums.

Birthday Celebrations Have Left a Trail of Death

THE celebration of birthdays is regarded by most people today as merely an innocent custom. But the Bible does not paint a positive picture of this tradition. For one thing, the Scriptures contain no indication that any of God's faithful servants celebrated birthdays.

Arena at Caesarea

The only two birthdays the Bible does mention were for rulers who were enemies of God. Each celebration included an execution, so that the guests could gloat over the death of one who had displeased the king. In the first instance, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, executed his chief baker. (Genesis 40:2, 3, 20, 22) The Egyptian ruler did so during the feast because he had grown indignant with his servant. In the second instance, Herod, the immoral ruler of Galilee, beheaded John the Baptizer as a favor to a girl whose dancing at the party had pleased him. What repulsive scenes!—Matthew 14: 6-11.

Yet has not the Bible focused on two very exceptional birthdays? Not really. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus reveals that these incidents were not unique. He records other instances of the practice of birthday executions for entertainment.

For example, some occurred after Jerusalem's destruction in 70 C.E., when 1,000,000 Jews perished and 97,000 survived to be taken prisoner. En route to Rome, Roman general Titus took his Jewish captives to the nearby seaport of Caesarea.

Josephus writes: "While Titus remained at Caesarea, he celebrated his brother Domitian's birthday with great splendor, putting over 2,500 prisoners to death in games with beasts and flames. After this he moved to Berytus [Beirut], a Roman colony in Phoenicia, where he celebrated his father's birthday by killing many more captives at elaborate exhibitions."—*The Jewish War,* VII, 37, translated by Paul L. Maier in *Josephus: The Essential Writings.*

It is no wonder that *The Imperial Bible-Dictionary* comments: "The later Hebrews looked on the celebration of birth-days as a part of idolatrous worship, a view which would be abundantly confirmed by what they saw of the common observances associated with these days."

Faithful first-century Christians would not have felt like joining in a custom so darkly presented in the Bible and so gruesomely celebrated by the Romans. Today, sincere Christians realize that the Bible accounts about birthdays were among the things written for their instruction. (Romans 15:4) They avoid celebrating birthdays because such observances bestow undue importance on the individual. More significant, Jehovah's servants wisely take into account the unfavorable presentation of birthdays in the Bible.

They Were Rewarded for Walking Blamelessly

JEHOVAH blesses and rewards his faithful servants. They may have to wait for some time to see the outworking of God's purposes, but what a delight it is when his blessing is experienced!

This was well illustrated some two thousand years ago in the case of the Jewish priest Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, both of Aaron's family. God had promised to bless the Israelites with offspring if they served him faithfully. He said that children are a reward. (Leviticus 26:9; Psalm 127:3) However, Zechariah and Elizabeth were childless and well along in years.—Luke 1:1-7.

The Scriptures say that Zechariah and Elizabeth "both were righteous before God because of walking blamelessly in accord with all the commandments and legal requirements of Jehovah." (Luke 1:6) They loved God so much that it was no burden for them to pursue a righteous course and keep his commandments.—1 John 5:3.

Unexpected Blessings

Let us return to the late spring or early summer of the year 3 B.C.E. Herod the Great is ruling as king in Judea. One day, the priest Zechariah enters the Holy of the temple in Jerusalem. While the people are gathered in prayer outside the sanctuary, he burns incense on the golden altar. Probably considered the most honorable of daily services, this is done after the sacrifice is offered. A priest may have had this privilege only once in his lifetime.

Zechariah cannot believe his eyes. Why, Jehovah's angel is standing at the right side of the incense altar! The aged priest becomes troubled and fearful. But the angel says: "Have no fear, Zechariah, because your supplication has been favorably heard, and your wife Elizabeth will become mother to a son to you, and you are to call his name John." Yes, Jehovah has heard the earnest prayers of Elizabeth and Zechariah.—Luke 1:8-13.

The angel adds: "You will have joy and great gladness, and many will rejoice over his birth; for he will be great before Jehovah. But he must drink no wine and strong drink at all, and he will be filled with holy spirit right from his mother's womb." John will be a lifelong Nazirite filled with God's holy spirit. The angel continues: "Many of the sons of Israel will he turn back to Jehovah their God. Also, he will go before him with Elijah's spirit and power, to turn back the hearts of fathers to children and the disobedient ones to the practical wisdom of righteous ones, to get ready for Jehovah a prepared people."—Luke 1:14-17.

Zechariah asks: "How am I to be sure of this? For I am aged and my wife is well along in years." The angel replies: "I am Gabriel, who stands near before God, and I was sent forth to speak with you and declare the good news of these things to you. But, look! you will be silent and not able to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their appointed time." When Zechariah emerges from the sanctuary, he cannot speak, and the people perceive that he has seen a supernatural sight. All he can do is make signs, using gestures to convey

his thoughts. When his public service is over, he returns home.—Luke 1:18-23.

Cause for Joy

True to the promise, Elizabeth soon has reason to rejoice. She becomes pregnant, removing the reproach of barrenness. Her relative Mary also becomes joyful, for the same angel, Gabriel, tells her: "Look! you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call his name Jesus. This one will be great and will be called Son of the Most High; and Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father." Mary is willing to play the role of "Jehovah's slave girl." —Luke 1:24-38.

Mary hastens to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth in a city of the Judean mountainous country. At the sound of Mary's greeting, the infant in Elizabeth's womb leaps. Under the influence of God's holy spirit, Elizabeth loudly cries out: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! So how is it that this privilege is mine, to have the mother of my Lord come to me? For, look! as the sound of your greeting fell upon my ears, the infant in my womb leaped with great gladness. Happy too is she that believed, because there will be a complete performance of those things spoken to her from Jehovah." Mary responds with great joy. Her stay with Elizabeth lasts about three months.—Luke 1: 39-56.

John Is Born

In due time a son is born to aged Elizabeth and Zechariah. On the eighth day, the infant is circumcised. Relatives want to call the boy Zechariah, but Elizabeth says: "No, indeed! but he shall be called John." Does her still speechless husband agree? On a tablet he writes: "John is its name." Instantly, Zechariah's tongue is loosed, and he begins to speak, blessing Jehovah.—Luke 1:57-66.

Filled with holy spirit, the joyful priest prophesies. He speaks as if the promised Deliverer—'the horn of salvation in David's house'—has already been raised up in harmony with the Abrahamic covenant about a Seed of blessing for all nations. (Genesis 22: 15-18) As the Messiah's forerunner, Zechariah's own miraculously born son will 'go in advance before Jehovah to give people knowledge of salvation.' As the years passed, John kept growing and becoming strong in spirit.—Luke 1:67-80.

Richly Rewarded

Zechariah and Elizabeth were fine examples of faith and patience. They continued to serve Jehovah faithfully even though they had to wait on God, and their greatest blessings came only when they were well advanced in years.

Yet, what blessings Elizabeth and Zechariah enjoyed! Under the influence of God's spirit, both of them prophesied. They were privileged to become the parents and instructors of the Messiah's forerunner, John the Baptizer. Moreover, God viewed them as righteous. Likewise, those who today pursue a godly course can have a righteous standing with God and will receive many blessed rewards for walking blamelessly in the commandments of Jehovah.

In Our Next Issue

The Nuclear Threat—Over At Last?

Cultivate Reasonableness

Serving With the Most Progressive Organization

How Accurate Is the Jewish Calendar?

ACCORDING to the Jewish calendar, Thursday, September 16, 1993, was the festival day of Rosh Hashanah. By tradition the shofar, or ram's-horn trumpet, was then sounded to proclaim the incoming of the new year. That year is 5754 (Jewish calendar), and it runs from September 16, 1993, to September 5, 1994.

Right away, we note that there is a difference of 3,760 years between the Jewish count of time and the Western, or Gregorian, calendar that is now in common use. Why does this difference exist? And how accurate is the Jewish calendar?

Fixing the Starting Point

Any system of counting time must have a specific starting or reference point. For example, Christendom counts time from the year in which Jesus Christ was supposed to have been born. Dates since then are said to be in the Christian era. They are often designated by the notation A.D., from the Latin *anno Domini,* meaning "in the year of the Lord." Dates before that period are marked B.C., "Before Christ."* The traditional Chinese similarly count time from 2698 B.C.E., the beginning of the reign of legendary Huang-Ti, the Yellow Emperor. Thus, February 10, 1994, marked the beginning of the Chinese lunar year 4692. What, though, about the Jewish calendar?

The Jewish Encyclopedia states: "The present usual method among Jews of recording the date of an event is to state the number of years that have elapsed since the creation of the world." This system, known among Jews as the Era of the Creation, came into common use in about the ninth century C.E. Thus, dates in the Jewish calendar are usually preceded by the designation A.M. It stands for *anno mundi,* which is an abbreviated form of *ab creatione mundi,* meaning "from the creation of the world." Since the current year is A.M. 5754, according to this system of counting time, "the creation of the world" is regarded as having taken place 5,753 years ago. Let us see how that is determined.

"Era of the Creation"

Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971) provides this explanation: "In various rabbinical computations the 'Era of the Creation' began in the autumn of one of the years between 3762 and 3758 B.C.E. From the 12th century C.E., however, it became accepted that the 'Era of the Creation' began in 3761 B.C.E. (to be exact, on Oct. 7 of that year). This computation is founded on synchronisms of chronological elements expressed in the Bible and calculations found in early post-biblical Jewish literature."

The system of dating from "the creation

* Both Biblical and historical evidence points to Jesus Christ's birth in the year 2 B.C. For the sake of accuracy, therefore, many prefer to use the designations C.E. (Common Era) and B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), and this is the way dates are indicated in publications of the Watch Tower Society.

of the world" is essentially based on rabbinical interpretations of the Bible record. Because of their belief that the world and everything in it was created in six literal 24-hour days, rabbinical scholars, as well as those of Christendom, assume that the creation of the first man, Adam, took place in the same year as the creation of the world. However, this is far from being accurate.

The first chapter of Genesis opens by stating: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Then it goes on to describe what God did in six successive "days" to transform the earth from a "formless and waste" condition to a suitable habitat for humans. (Genesis 1:1, 2) Millions of years could have transpired between these two stages. Furthermore, the creative days were not 24-hour periods, as if the Creator's activities were bound by such a limitation. That a "day" in this context can be longer than 24 hours is indicated by Genesis 2:4, which speaks of all the creative periods as one "day." Many thousands of years went by between the first creative day and the sixth, when Adam was created. Dating the creation of Adam at the same time as that of the physical heavens and earth is neither Scriptural nor scientific. Still, how was it determined that the "Era of the Creation" began in 3761 B.C.E.?

Basis for the Chronology

Unfortunately, most of the Jewish literature on which the computations under consideration were based is no longer in existence. What remains is a chronological work originally called *Seder 'Olam* (Order of the World). It is attributed to second-century C.E. Talmudic scholar Yose ben Halafta. This work (later called *Seder 'Olam Rabbah* to distinguish it from a Medieval chronicle entitled *Seder 'Olam Zuṭa*) gives a chronological history from Adam to the second-century C.E. Jewish revolt against Rome under the false Messiah Bar Kokhba. How did the writer acquire such information?

While Yose ben Halafta endeavored to follow the Bible's account, he added his own interpretations where the text was not explicit as to the dates involved. "In many cases, . . . he gave the dates according to tradition, and inserted, besides, the sayings and halakot [traditions] of preceding rabbis and of his contemporaries," says *The Jewish Encyclopedia.* Others are less kind in their assessment. *The Book of Jewish Knowledge* asserts: "He counted from the Era of Creation and, accordingly, ascribed fancied dates to various Jewish events that were presumed to have taken place from Adam, the first man, to Alexander the Great." But just how did such interpretations and insertions affect the accuracy and authenticity of Jewish chronology? Let us see.

Traditions and Interpretations

In accord with rabbinic tradition, Yose ben Halafta calculated that the second temple in Jerusalem lasted a total of 420 years. This was based on the rabbinic interpretation of Daniel's prophecy of "seventy weeks," or 490 years. (Daniel 9:24) This time period was applied to the interval between the destruction of the first temple and the devastation of the second. Allowing 70 years for the Babylonian exile, Yose ben Halafta came to the conclusion that the second temple lasted 420 years.

This interpretation, however, runs into a serious problem. Both the year of Babylon's overthrow (539 B.C.E.) and that of the second temple's destruction (70 C.E.) are known historical dates. Hence, the period of the second temple would have to be 605 years rather than 420 years. By assigning

only 420 years to this period, Jewish chronology falls short by 185 years.

Daniel's prophecy is not about how long the temple in Jerusalem would remain standing. Rather, it foretold the time when the Messiah would appear. The prophecy clearly indicates that "from the going forth of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Leader, there [would] be seven weeks, also sixty-two weeks." (Daniel 9:25, 26) While the temple foundation was laid in the second year of the Jews' return from exile (536 B.C.E.), "the word" to rebuild the city of Jerusalem did not go forth until "the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king." (Nehemiah 2: 1-8) Accurate secular history establishes 455 B.C.E. as that year. Counting forward 69 "weeks," or 483 years, brings us to 29 C.E. That was the time of the Messiah's appearance, at Jesus' baptism.*

Another point of rabbinic interpretation that resulted in a large discrepancy in Jewish chronology pertains to the time of Abraham's birth. The rabbis added the years of the successive generations recorded at Genesis 11:10-26 and assigned 292 years to the period from the Flood to the birth of Abraham (Abram). However, the problem lies in the rabbinic interpretation of verse 26, which says: "Terah lived on for seventy years, after which he became father to Abram, Nahor and Haran." From this, Jewish tradition assumes that Terah was 70 years old when Abram was born. Yet, the verse does not specifically say that Terah became father to Abraham at age 70. Instead, it merely says that he became father to three sons after he was 70 years old.

To find the correct age of Terah at the birth of Abraham, we need only to read on in the Bible narrative. From Genesis 11: 32–12:4, we learn that after Terah's death at the age of 205, Abraham and his family left Haran at Jehovah's bidding. At that time Abraham was 75 years old. Hence, Abraham must have been born when Terah was 130 years old, rather than 70. Thus, the period from the Flood to the birth of Abraham was 352 years, rather than 292 years. Here Jewish chronology errs by 60 years.

A Religious Relic

Such errors and discrepancies in *Seder 'Olam Rabbah* and other Talmudic chronological works have caused much embarrassment and considerable discussion among Jewish scholars. Although numerous attempts have been made to reconcile this chronology with known historical facts, they have not been entirely successful. Why not? "Their interest was not so much academic as religious," observes *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. "Tradition had to be upheld at all costs, especially in the face of dissident sectarians." Instead of eliminating the confusion caused by their traditions, some Jewish scholars attempted to discredit the Bible accounts. Others tried to find support in Babylonian, Egyptian, and Hindu legends and traditions.

Consequently, historians no longer view the "Era of the Creation" as a serious piece of chronological work. Few Jewish scholars would endeavor to defend it, and even such authoritative reference works as *The Jewish Encyclopedia* and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* take a generally negative view of it. Hence, the traditional Jewish method of counting time from the creation of the world cannot be viewed as accurate from the standpoint of Bible chronology, the unfolding prophetic timetable of Jehovah God.

* For details, see *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, pages 614-16, 900-902, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

"They Know His Voice"

"JEHOVAH is my Shepherd." These are the opening words of Psalm 23. The Scriptures again compare Jehovah God to a shepherd in the prophecy of Isaiah, which says: "Like a shepherd he will shepherd his own drove. With his arm he will collect together the lambs; and in his bosom he will carry them. Those giving suck he will conduct with care."—Isaiah 40:11.

Similarly, Jesus Christ is likened to a shepherd. He said: "I am the fine shepherd; the fine shepherd surrenders his soul in behalf of the sheep." (John 10:11) Jesus said that the "sheep listen to [the shepherd's] voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." He added that "the sheep follow [the shepherd], because they know his voice. A stranger they will by no means follow but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." —John 10:2-5.

Both Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, have lived up to the image portrayed in the foregoing scriptures. They treat their figurative sheep with tenderness and loving care. As a result, the sheeplike ones feel loved, secure, and protected.

This relationship is appropriately likened to that of literal sheep with their shepherd. Back in 1831, John Hartley wrote about his observations in this regard. He noted that in Greece it was customary for shepherds to give names to their sheep. When called by name, the sheep would respond to the voice of the shepherd. Some 51 years later, in 1882, J. L. Porter made similar observations. He personally witnessed shepherds "uttering . . . a shrill peculiar call" to which the sheep would respond by obediently following the shepherds. That same year William M. Thomson wrote about repeated experiments that established that sheep can be taught to follow their shepherd and to recognize his voice.

Has this unique relationship between shepherds and their sheep been observed in more recent times? Yes. In the September 1993 issue of *National Geographic,* Australian adventurer Robyn Davidson wrote the following about the Rabari pastoralists in northwest India: "Each shepherd has slightly different calls, variations on a theme. There are morning calls to move out, a call to bring the sheep to water, and so on. Each man knows his own sheep and vice versa, and his particular flock will disentangle itself from the larger flock and move out behind him in the morning."

Undoubtedly, Jesus observed what has been described by the four travelers just mentioned. His own observations added reality to his illustration of the sheep knowing his voice. Are you one of Jesus' sheep? Do you know his voice and listen to it? If you recognize and acknowledge his teachings as the truth and if you obey his commandments and follow his lead in worshiping Jehovah, then you can experience the loving and tender shepherding of Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ.—John 15:10.

Freedom From Fear At Hand!

THOUGH man lives in fear from cradle to grave, we can confidently look to a time in the near future when God's Kingdom by Christ Jesus will forever eliminate all suffering—including sickness and death. This magazine has shown what is required in order to benefit from God's loving provisions.