

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

DECEMBER 15, 1994

Christmas

Is It Truly Christian?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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What Does Christmas Mean to You?

How would you answer? Christmas is

- (1) a time to be with your family; (2) a time for parties; (3) a religious time; (4) a stressful time; (5) a nostalgic time; (6) a time of blatant commercialism.*

SURPRISING as it may seem, of more than 1,000 people surveyed in Britain, only 6 percent considered Christmas to be primarily a religious occasion. In contrast, 48 percent thought of Christmas predominantly as a time to be with their family. Indeed, many maintain that it is a special time for children. Typically, one 11-year-old girl, when asked what she liked best about Christmas, replied: "The excitement, feeling of happiness, [and] giving presents." *The Making of the Modern Christmas* agrees that "the strongest emphases of . . . 'traditional' Christmas are undoubtedly on the home, the family and particularly the children."

But it is especially in western Christendom that Christmas is a family affair, when relatives gather to exchange gifts. In countries where the Eastern Orthodox Church holds sway, people place more emphasis on

Easter; still, Christmastime is usually a vacation period.

A "Commercial Operation"

Christmas has "undergone a process of striking . . . commercialization," states *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*. Nowhere perhaps is this more true than in Japan.

"The Japanese have dropped all pretense of religion and turned Christmas into a strictly commercial operation," reports the *Washington Daily Record*. Christmas in Japan, it adds, is "a major celebration that's heavy on the commercialism and rather light on the religious aspect."

Even in many so-called Christian countries, this "religious aspect" is often hard to detect. Some 40 years ago, an anti-Christmas pamphlet lamented: "Christmas is boosted by the commercial world. It is the greatest money-making season of the year.

Professed Christian business men look forward to the Christmas season, not for the sake of Christ, but for the sake of financial gain." How true those words are today! In many lands, rarely do we reach the beginning of the last quarter of the year before we hear reminders of how many days remain to buy gifts for next Christmas. Business

becomes brisker as the year ends, with as much as one quarter of stores' annual sales coming at Christmastime.

Whatever Christmas means to you now, you may well wonder how it started. Does the Bible, in fact, support Christmas gift giving? Are today's Christmas celebrations truly Christian? Let us see.

Culver Pictures



Christmas

Is It Truly Christian?

ACCORDING to *The World Book Encyclopedia*, "Christmas is the day on which Christians celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ." Nevertheless, the encyclopedia also states: "The early Christians did not celebrate [Jesus'] birth because they considered the celebration of anyone's birth to be a pagan custom."

The Making of the Modern Christmas, by Golby and Purdue, agrees: "Early Christians did not celebrate the birth of Christ.

Birthdays in themselves were associated with pagan practices; the Gospels say nothing about the actual date of Christ's birth."

If birthday celebrations do not have a Christian background, how did the birthday of Christ become such a prominent "Christian" festival?

The Pagan Origin of "Christmas"

"Everyone feasted and rejoiced, work and business were for a season entirely sus-

pendent, the houses were decked with laurel and evergreen, visits and presents were exchanged between friends, and clients gave gifts to their patrons. The whole season was one of rejoicing and goodwill, and all kinds of amusements were indulged in by the people.”—*Paganism in Christian Festivals*, by J. M. Wheeler.

Does this description fit the Christmas festivities you know? Surprisingly this was not Christmas! Rather, that is a description of Saturnalia—a week-long pagan Roman festival associated with the winter solstice (depicted on opposite page). The birthday of the unconquered sun was celebrated on December 25, a principal feast-day of Rome’s Mithraic religion.

According to *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, “December 25, the birthday of Mithra, the Iranian god of light and . . . the day devoted to the invincible sun, as well as the day after the Saturnalia, was adopted by the church as Christmas, the nativity of Christ, to counteract the effects of these festivals.” So the pagan birthday celebration continued with a simple switch in names, from Mithra to Christ!

However, you may feel that the birth of God’s Son, Jesus, was something special, deserving to be remembered. A look at what the Bible relates about this will prove to be very enlightening.

A Joyous Event

The 2nd chapter of Luke’s Gospel sets the scene. Luke tells us how heavenly angels, humble shepherds, devout servants of God, and Mary herself reacted to this noteworthy event.

Consider first the “shepherds living out of doors” who were “keeping watches in the night over their flocks,” which they would not have been doing in the depths of winter. When “Jehovah’s angel” appeared

and God’s glory shone around them, the shepherds were at first afraid. Reassurance came when the angel explained: “Have no fear, for, look! I am declaring to you good news of a great joy that all the people will have, because there was born to you today a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” When “a multitude of the heavenly army” of angels suddenly appeared, the shepherds knew that this birth was different from all others. Interestingly, the angels brought no gifts for the newborn infant. Rather, the angels praised Jehovah, saying: “Glory in the heights above to God, and upon earth peace among men of goodwill.”—Luke 2:8-14.

Naturally, the shepherds wanted to see this baby for themselves, for it was Jehovah who had announced the happy event. When they found the infant lying in the manger, they told the parents what the angels had said. The shepherds then departed, “glorifying and praising God,” not the baby.—Luke 2:15-18, 20.

Mary, Jesus’ mother, no doubt rejoiced over the successful delivery of her first-born. But she also drew “conclusions in her heart.” Then, accompanied by her husband, Joseph, she traveled to Jerusalem in obedience to the Mosaic Law. This was no birthday celebration. Instead, it was a time to present the infant to God, “just as it is written in Jehovah’s law: ‘Every male opening a womb must be called holy to Jehovah.’” —Luke 2:19, 22-24.

At the temple in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph encountered Simeon, whom Luke describes as “righteous and reverent, waiting for Israel’s consolation.” Under inspiration, he had been told that he would not die before seeing “the Christ of Jehovah.” What happened next was also “under the power of [God’s] spirit.” Simeon took the infant in his arms, no, not to give him a present, but,

rather, to bless God, saying: "Now, Sovereign Lord, you are letting your slave go free in peace according to your declaration; because my eyes have seen your means of saving that you have made ready in the sight of all the peoples."—Luke 2:25-32.

Next, the aged prophetess Anna came near. She too "began returning thanks to God and speaking about the child to all those waiting for Jerusalem's deliverance."—Luke 2:36-38.

Mary, Simeon, Anna, the shepherds, as well as the heavenly angels, *all rejoiced* at Jesus' birth. Please note, however, that they indulged in no birthday revelry, nor did they engage in gift giving. Rather, they *glorified Jehovah*, the heavenly Provider of their means of salvation.

Still, some may reason, 'Surely Christmas gift giving cannot be wrong, for did not the "three wise men" honor Jesus with gifts?'

Christmas Gifts

Again let us examine the Biblical account. You will find it recorded in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 2. There is no mention of any birthday celebration, nor is any specific time given, though obviously it was some time after Jesus' birth. In verse 1, Matthew calls the visitors "astrologers [Greek, *ma'goi*] from eastern parts," hence pagans with no knowledge of Jehovah God. The star these men followed led them, not directly to Jesus' birthplace in Bethlehem, but to Jerusalem, where King Herod ruled.

When this wicked ruler heard them inquiring about "the one born king of the Jews," he sought out the priests to find exactly "where the Christ was to be born" so that he could have the child killed. The priests answered by quoting Micah's prophecy that located Messiah's birthplace in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2) Herod hypocritical-

ly instructed his visitors: "Go make a careful search for the young child, and when you have found it report back to me, that I too may go and do it obeisance." The astrologers went on their way, and the star "went ahead of them, until it came to a stop above where the young child was." Notice that he is described as a "young child," not as a newborn baby.—Matthew 2:1-10.

As befitted Oriental magnates visiting a ruler, the pagan astrologers fell down and "presented [the young child] with gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." Matthew adds: "However, because they were given divine warning in a dream not to return to Herod, they withdrew to their country by another way."—Matthew 2:11, 12.

From this brief Scriptural account, some people might attempt to find support for their Christmas gift giving. Nevertheless, *Discovering Christmas Customs and Folklore* explains that the current custom of giving gifts finds its roots in the Saturnalia gifts that Romans offered their poor neighbors. "The early church . . . cleverly transferred its significance to a ritual commemoration of the gifts of the Magi." What a contrast this is to the true worshipers—such as the humble shepherds—who simply praised God at Jesus' birth!

Honor Christ as King!

Today Jesus is no longer a baby. He is a powerful Potentate, King of God's heavenly Kingdom, and he should be honored as such.—1 Timothy 6:15, 16.

If you are now an adult, have you ever felt embarrassed when, in your presence, people showed photographs of you as a baby? True, such pictures remind your parents of their joy at your birth. But now that you have an identity of your own, do you not usually prefer others to see you as you are? In a simi-

**Christians give their neighbors
one of the greatest gifts
—the understanding of God's
purpose that leads to eternal life**

lar vein, think how disrespectful it is toward Christ Jesus when those who claim to be his followers become so engrossed each year in the pagan traditions of Christmas and in honoring an infant that they fail to honor him as King. Why, even in the first century, the Christian apostle Paul reasoned on the propriety of thinking of Christ as he now is—a King in heaven. Paul wrote: “Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, certainly we *now know him so no more*!”—2 Corinthians 5:16.

Christ, as King of God's Kingdom, will soon make come true the prophetic promise to remove pain, suffering, disease, and death. He is the One who will ensure adequate housing and rewarding work for all under Paradise conditions here on earth. (Isaiah 65:21-23; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Revelation 21:3, 4) Surely, these are reasons enough to avoid dishonoring Jesus!

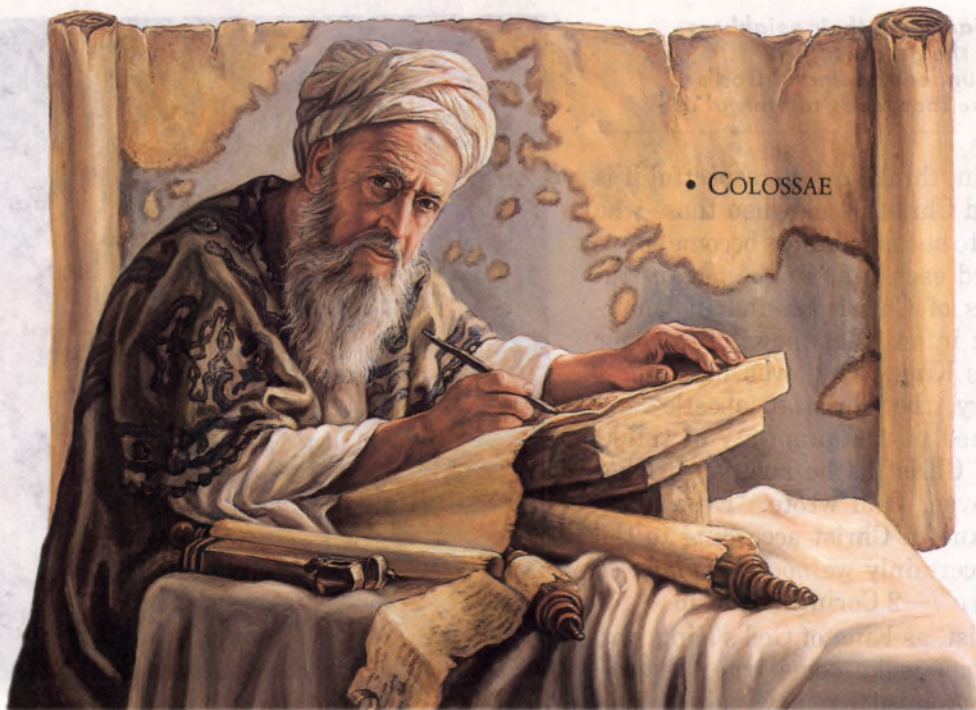
Following Christ's own example, true Christians strive to give their neighbors one of the greatest gifts anyone can offer—an understanding of God's purpose, which can lead to eternal life. (John 17:3) This type of gift giving brings them much joy, even as Jesus said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—Acts 20:35; Luke 11:27, 28.

Christians who have a genuine interest in one another find no difficulty in spontaneously expressing their love at any time of the year. (Philippians 2:3, 4) As a simple example, what a thrill it would be to receive a picture from a Christian youngster who,



after listening to a Bible talk, drew it as an expression of thanks! Equally encouraging is the unexpected present from a relative as a token of that one's love. Likewise, Christian parents gain much joy when they choose appropriate occasions throughout the year to give gifts to their children. This kind of Christian generosity is untarnished either by perceived obligation on celebration days or by pagan tradition.

Consequently, today over four and a half million Christians from all nations do not celebrate Christmas. These are Jehovah's Witnesses, who regularly busy themselves by giving to their neighbors a witness about the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) You may well meet them when they visit your home, perhaps soon. May your eager reception of what they bring you lead your family to great joy, as you learn how to praise Jehovah God every day of the year. —Psalm 145:1, 2.



JEHOVAH CAN MAKE YOU POWERFUL

"He is giving to the tired one power; and to the one without dynamic energy he makes full might abound."—ISAIAH 40:29.

JEHOVAH is a God "abundant in power." We can see proof of God's "eternal power and Godship" in the magnificence of his physical creation. Those refusing to acknowledge such evidence of his Creatorship are inexcusable.—Psalm 147:5; Romans 1:19, 20.

² Jehovah's power becomes increasing-

1, 2. What are some evidences of Jehovah's abundant power?

ly evident as scientists probe deep into the universe, with its countless galaxies stretching for hundreds of millions of light-years. On a dark but clear night, gaze into the heavens and see if you do not feel as did the psalmist: "When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared, what is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and the son of earthling man that you take care of

him?" (Psalm 8:3, 4) And how well Jehovah has taken care of man, of us! He provided the first man and woman with a beautiful earthly home. Even its soil had power—to grow vegetation, yielding nutritious, unpolluted food. Man and animals draw physical power from this display of God's power.—Genesis 1:12; 4:12; 1 Samuel 28:22.

³ Besides the heavens being fascinating and earth's flora and fauna being delightful, they display to us God's power. The apostle Paul wrote: "His invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship." (Romans 1:20) But there is another evidence of his power that merits our attention and appreciation. 'What,' you might wonder, 'displays God's power more so than the universe?' The answer is Jesus Christ. In fact, under inspiration the apostle Paul says that Christ impaled is "the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24) 'Why is that?' you might ask, 'And what bearing can it have on my life right now?'

Power Through His Son

⁴ God's power was first demonstrated when he created his only-begotten Son, made in his image. This spirit Son served Jehovah as a "master worker" by using God's abundant power in creating all other things. (Proverbs 8:22, 30) Paul wrote to his Christian brothers in Colossae: "By means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible . . . All other things have been created through him and for him."—Colossians 1:15, 16.

3. Besides the physical things of the universe, what else manifests God's power?

4. How was God's power shown in connection with his Son?

⁵ We are part of the 'things created upon the earth.' So could God's power be extended to us humans? Well, throughout God's dealings with imperfect humans, Jehovah has from time to time imparted extra power to his servants in order for them to carry out his purposes. Moses knew that, in general, imperfect humans live 70 or 80 years. (Psalm 90:10) What of Moses himself? He lived to be 120 years of age, yet "his eye had not grown dim, and his vital strength had not fled." (Deuteronomy 34:7) While that does not mean that God enables each of his servants to live so long or to keep such vigor, it does prove that Jehovah can empower humans.

⁶ Further showing God's ability to empower men and women is what he did with Abraham's wife. "Sarah herself received power to conceive seed, even when she was past the age limit, since she esteemed him faithful who had promised." Or consider how God empowered judges and others in Israel: "Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David as well as Samuel and the other prophets, who . . . from a weak state were made powerful."—Hebrews 11:11, 32-34.

⁷ Such power can become operative in our case too. Oh, we may not now expect offspring through a miracle, or we may not display mightiness like Samson's. But powerful we can be, as Paul mentioned to average humans in Colossae. Yes, Paul wrote to men, women, and children, such as we find in congregations today, and he said that they were "being made powerful with all power."—Colossians 1:11.

⁸ During Jesus' earthly ministry, Jehovah made it clear that his power was

5-7. (a) In the past, how were humans involved in displays of the power of God? (b) What reason is there to believe that God's power can be manifested in the case of Christians today?

8, 9. In the first century, how was Jehovah's power made evident respecting humans like us?

working through his Son. For example, at a time when multitudes flocked to Jesus in Capernaum, "Jehovah's power was there for him to do healing."—Luke 5:17.

⁹ Following his resurrection, Jesus assured his followers that they would 'receive power when the holy spirit arrived upon them.' (Acts 1:8) How true! A historian reports on developments a few days after Pentecost in 33 C.E.: "With great power the apostles continued giving forth the witness concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 4:33) Paul himself was one who was made powerful for the work that God commissioned him to do. After his conversion and recovery of sight, he "kept on acquiring power all the more and was confounding the Jews that dwelt in Damascus as he proved logically that this is the Christ."—Acts 9:22.

¹⁰ Certainly Paul needed extra power, when we consider the spiritual and mental stamina required to carry out three missionary journeys covering thousands of miles. He also put up with all sorts of hardships, enduring imprisonments and facing martyrdom. How? He answered: "The Lord stood near me and infused power into me, that through me the preaching might be fully accomplished."—2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27.

¹¹ It is not surprising, then, that Paul, when writing to his "brothers in union with Christ" in Colossae, assured them that they could be "made powerful with all power to the extent of [Jehovah's] glorious might so as to endure fully and be long-suffering with joy." (Colossians 1:2, 11) Though those words were primarily addressed to anointed Christians, all who follow in Christ's

footsteps can greatly benefit from what Paul wrote.

Empowered in Colossae

¹² The congregation in Colossae, situated in the Roman province of Asia, was probably formed through the preaching of the faithful Christian named Epaphras. It seems that when he heard of Paul's imprisonment in Rome about 58 C.E., Epaphras determined to visit the apostle and encourage him with a fine report of the love and steadfastness of his brothers in Colossae. Epaphras likely also passed on a faithful report about some problems in the Colossian congregation that needed correcting. In turn, Paul felt urged to write the congregation a letter of encouragement and admonition. You too may draw considerable encouragement from chapter 1 of that letter, for it throws light on how Jehovah can make his servants powerful.

¹³ You can imagine how the brothers and sisters in Colossae must have felt when Paul described them as "faithful brothers in union with Christ." They were to be commended for their 'love for all the holy ones' and for 'bearing fruit of the good news' from the time they became Christians! Can these same expressions be said of our congregation, of us individually?—Colossians 1:2-8.

¹⁴ Paul was so moved by the report he received that he told the Colossians that he had not ceased praying for them and asking that they be "filled with the accurate knowledge of [God's] will in all wisdom and spiritual comprehension, in order to walk worthily of Jehovah." He prayed that they

12, 13. What is the background of the letter to the Colossians, and what likely was the response to it?

14. What was Paul's desire regarding the Colossians?

10. How was power from God helpful in Paul's case?

11. As to God's power, what hope did Paul refer to for his fellow servants in Colossae?

“go on bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the accurate knowledge of God, being made powerful with all power to the extent of his glorious might so as to endure fully and be long-suffering with joy.”—Colossians 1:9-11.

Empowered Today Too

¹⁵ What a fine example Paul set for us! Our brothers around the earth need our prayers that they endure and maintain their joy despite their sufferings. Like Paul, we should be specific in our prayers when we get news that brothers in another congregation, or another land, are having hard times. It may be that a nearby congregation is affected by a natural disaster or some spiritual difficulty. Or it may be that Christians are enduring in a land racked by civil war or intertribal killings. In prayer we should ask God to help our brothers “to walk worthily of Jehovah,” to go on bearing Kingdom fruitage while they are enduring, and to increase in knowledge. In this way God’s servants receive the power of his spirit, “being made powerful with all power.” You can be certain that your Father will hear and respond.—1 John 5:14, 15.

¹⁶ Paul wrote that the Colossians should be ‘thanking the Father who rendered them suitable for participation in the inheritance of the holy ones in the light.’ Let us too thank our heavenly Father for our place in his arrangement, whether in the heavenly or in the earthly realm of his Kingdom. How did God make imperfect humans suitable in his eyes? Paul wrote to his anointed brothers: “He delivered us from the authority of the darkness and trans-

ferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, by means of whom we have our release by ransom, the forgiveness of our sins.”—Colossians 1:12-14.

¹⁷ Whatever our hope, heavenly or earthly, we thank God daily for our deliverance from this evil system of darkness, accomplished by our faith in the precious provision of the ransom sacrifice of Jehovah’s dear Son. (Matthew 20:28) Spirit-anointed Christians have benefited from the ransom being applied to them in a special way so that they can be ‘transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love.’ (Luke 22:20, 29, 30) But the “other sheep” also benefit from the ransom even now. (John 10:16) They can receive God’s forgiveness so as to have a righteous standing before him as his friends. They have a large share in proclaiming “this good news of the kingdom” in this time of the end. (Matthew 24:14) Beyond that, they have the marvelous hope of becoming completely righteous and physically perfect, by the end of Christ’s Millennial Reign. As you read the description at Revelation 7:13-17, see if you do not agree that this would be proof of being delivered and blessed.

¹⁸ Paul’s letter helps us realize how much we owe to the greatest man who ever lived. What was God accomplishing through Christ? “[It was] to reconcile again to himself all other things by making peace through the blood he shed on the torture stake, no matter whether they are the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens.” God’s purpose is to bring all creation back into complete harmony with him, as it was prior to the rebellion in Eden. The One used to create all things is the same One now used to accomplish this reconciliation.—Colossians 1:20.

15. How can we display the same attitude as was reflected in what Paul wrote to the Colossians? 16, 17. (a) As Paul wrote, for what should we be thankful? (b) In what sense have God’s people been released and forgiven?

18. What reconciliation mentioned in Colossians is God still accomplishing?

Empowered to What End?

¹⁹ Responsibilities come to those of us who are reconciled to God. We once were sinful and alienated from God. But now, having put faith in Jesus' sacrifice and with our minds no longer on works that are wicked, we stand basically in a "holy and unblemished" state, "open to no accusation before [God]." (Colossians 1:21, 22) Imagine, just as God was not ashamed of those faithful witnesses of old, so he is not ashamed of us, to be called upon as our God. (Hebrews 11:16) Today, no one can accuse us of wrongfully bearing his illustrious name, nor of our being afraid to declare that name to the ends of the earth!

²⁰ Yet notice the caution that Paul appended at Colossians 1:23: "Provided, of course, that you continue in the faith, established on the foundation and steadfast and not being shifted away from the hope of that good news which you heard, and which was preached in all creation that is under heaven." So much depends upon our remaining faithful to Jehovah, following in the footsteps of his dear Son. Jehovah and Jesus have done so much for us! May we show our love for them by following Paul's counsel.

²¹ The Colossian Christians must have been thrilled to hear that 'the good news which they heard' had already been "preached in all creation that is under heaven." Today it is even more exciting to hear the extent to which the good news of the Kingdom is being proclaimed by well over four and a half million Witnesses in more than 230 lands. Why, each year almost 300,000 out of all nations are becoming reconciled to God!—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.

19, 20. On what does our being holy and unblemished depend?

21. Why do we have great reason for being thrilled today?

²² Although Paul was evidently confined to prison at the time he wrote the letter to the Colossians, he did not bemoan his lot in any way. Rather, he said: "I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for you." Paul knew what it was "to endure fully and be long-suffering with joy." (Colossians 1:11, 24) But he knew that he did not do this in his own strength. Jehovah had made him powerful! It is the same today. Thousands of Witnesses who have been imprisoned and persecuted have not lost their joy in serving Jehovah. Rather, they have come to appreciate the truthfulness of God's words as found at Isaiah 40:29-31: "He is giving to the tired one power . . . Those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power."

²³ The ministry of the good news centering on Christ meant so much to Paul. He wanted others to appreciate the value of Christ's role in God's purpose, so he described it as "the sacred secret that was hidden from the past systems of things and from the past generations." It was not always to be a secret though. Paul added: "Now it has been made manifest to his holy ones." (Colossians 1:26) When rebellion broke out in Eden, Jehovah gave a promise of better things to come, foretelling that 'the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent.' (Genesis 3:15) What did this mean? For generations, for centuries, it remained a mystery. Then Jesus came, and he "shed light upon life and incorruption through the good news."—2 Timothy 1:10.

²⁴ Yes, the "sacred secret" centers around Christ and the Messianic Kingdom. Paul mentioned "the things in the heavens," referring to those who will share in Kingdom rulership with Christ. These will be instru-

22. Even if we experience suffering, what can God do for us?

23, 24. What is the sacred secret mentioned at Colossians 1:26?

mental in bringing untold blessings to all the “things upon the earth,” those who will enjoy an everlasting paradise here. You can see how appropriate it was, then, for Paul to refer to “the glorious riches of this sacred secret.”—Colossians 1:20, 27.

²⁵ Paul looked forward to his place in the Kingdom. Yet he realized that it was not something for which he simply could sit back and hope. “I am indeed working hard, exerting myself in accordance with the operation of him and which is at work in me with power.” (Colossians 1:29) Note that Jehovah, through Christ, made Paul powerful to accomplish a lifesaving ministry. Jehovah can do the same for us today. But we should ask ourselves, ‘Do I have the evangelizing spirit that I had when I first

25. As indicated at Colossians 1:29, what should be our attitude now?

learned the truth?’ What is your answer? What can help each of us to continue ‘working hard and exerting ourselves in accordance with the operation of Jehovah’s power’? The next article is on this very matter.

Did You Note?

- ☐ Why can we be sure that Jehovah can display his power in behalf of humans?
- ☐ What is the background for Paul’s words in Colossians chapter 1?
- ☐ How is God carrying out the reconciliation mentioned at Colossians 1:20?
- ☐ By his power, what can Jehovah accomplish through us?

UNITED IN THE PERFECT BOND OF LOVE

“Be harmoniously joined together in love.”—COLOSSIANS 2:2.

LISTEN! A loud voice echoing throughout heaven saying: “Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time.” (Revelation 12:12) With the passing of each year, that message becomes

1, 2. What divisive influence is being felt especially today?

increasingly ominous for earth’s inhabitants.

² Jehovah’s great adversary has long been known as a *resister* (Satan) and a *slanderer* (Devil). But this deceiver now has taken on another sinister role—he has become an angry god! Why? Because he was thrown out of heaven by Michael and his angels in the war that began in

heaven in 1914. (Revelation 12:7-9) The Devil knows that he has only a short time to prove his challenge that he can turn all men aside from worshiping God. (Job 1:11; 2:4, 5) Having nowhere to turn for escape, he and his demons are like an angry swarm of bees that vent their rage on the restless masses of mankind.—Isaiah 57:20.

³ These happenings, unseen to human eyes, explain why there is now a general moral breakdown among mankind. They also explain men's frantic efforts to patch up the fragmenting of nations that simply cannot live in harmony. Tribal and ethnic groups viciously attack one another, producing millions of homeless and displaced people. No wonder lawlessness is increasing on an unprecedented scale! As Jesus foretold, 'the love of the greater number of mankind is cooling off.' Everywhere you look, disharmony and lovelessness mark today's restless humanity.—Matthew 24:12.

⁴ In view of the world situation, Jesus' prayer for his followers takes on deeper significance: "I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." (John 17:15, 16) Today, "the wicked one" especially vents his anger against those "who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus." (Revelation 12:17) Were it not for Jehovah's watchful and loving care, his faithful Witnesses would be wiped out. Our lives depend on our taking advantage of all the provisions that God makes for our spiritual safety and welfare. That involves our exerting ourselves in accord with the operation of His power through Christ, as the apostle urged at Colossians 1:29.

3. What has been the effect of Satan's being debased in our time?

4. Why are God's people in special danger?

⁵ Although Paul likely had never seen them face-to-face, he loved his brothers in Colossae. He told them: "I wish you could understand how deep is my anxiety for you." (Colossians 2:1, *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J. B. Phillips) Since Jesus' followers are no part of the world, "the wicked one" would keep trying to break the unity of the brothers by sowing among them the spirit of the world. The news Epaphras brought from Colossae indicated that this had been taking place to some extent.

⁶ One of Paul's principal interests for his Christian brothers could be summed up in the words: "Be harmoniously joined together in love." His words have special meaning today, in a world filled with disunity and lovelessness. If we take to heart Paul's advice, we will enjoy Jehovah's care. We will also experience the power of his spirit in our life, helping us to resist the pressures of the world. How wise this counsel is! Thus, Colossians 2:2 will be our theme text for 1995.

⁷ In an earlier letter to the Corinthians, the apostle used the human body as an illustration. He wrote that "there should be no division" in the congregation of anointed Christians but that "its members should have the same care for one another." (1 Corinthians 12:12, 24, 25) What a marvelous illustration! Our limbs are interdependent, each joined to the rest of our body. The same applies to our worldwide association of brothers, made up of anointed ones and millions hoping to live on a paradise earth. We must not sever ourselves from the body of fellow Christians to live independent—

5, 6. How did the apostle Paul feel about the Colossian Christians, and why is the theme text for 1995 appropriate?

7. What harmony should be found among true Christians?

ly! Operating through Christ Jesus, God's spirit flows to us in great measure through our association with our brothers.

Harmony in Line With Knowledge

⁸ One of Paul's key points was that Christian harmony is linked to knowledge, particularly that concerning Christ. Paul wrote that Christians should "be harmoniously joined together in love and with a view to all the riches of the full assurance of their understanding, with a view to an accurate knowledge of the sacred secret of God, namely, Christ." (Colossians 2:2) We have taken in knowledge—facts—since we began to study God's Word. As part of gaining an understanding of how many of these facts fit in God's purpose, we see the crucial role of Jesus. "Carefully concealed in him are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." —Colossians 2:3.

⁹ Is that how you feel about Jesus and his role in God's purpose? Many in Christendom are quick to mention Jesus, claiming to have accepted him and to have been saved. But do they really know him? Hardly, for most believe the unscriptural Trinity doctrine. Not only do you know the truth in this regard but you likely have quite a broad knowledge of what Jesus said and did. Millions have been helped in this by an informative study using the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*. Yet we need to keep deepening our knowledge of Jesus and his ways.

¹⁰ The statement that "all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge" are "carefully concealed" in Jesus does not mean that such knowledge is beyond our grasp. Rather, it is somewhat like an open mine. We

8, 9. (a) What is fundamental to our contributing to harmony in the congregation? (b) How have you gained knowledge about Christ?

10. In what way is concealed knowledge available to us?

do not have to hunt around a vast area wondering where to start digging. We already know—real knowledge begins with what the Bible reveals about Jesus Christ. As we appreciate more fully Jesus' role in the outworking of Jehovah's purpose, we obtain the treasures of true wisdom and accurate knowledge. So what we need is to dig ever deeper, lifting out more of the gems or precious things available from this source where we already have dug.—Proverbs 2: 1-5.

¹¹ For example, we may know that Jesus washed the feet of his apostles. (John 13: 1-20) Have we, though, meditated on the lesson he was teaching and the attitude he displayed? Doing so, we might draw up a treasure of wisdom that enables us—yes, moves us—to alter how we deal with a brother or a sister whose personality has long irritated us. Or when given an assignment that is not quite to our liking, we may respond differently once we get the rich sense of John 13:14, 15. That is how the knowledge and wisdom affect us. What might be the effect on others as we more closely pattern ourselves on increased

11. How may we increase our knowledge and wisdom by meditating on Jesus? (Illustrate with Jesus' washing the disciples' feet, or use other examples.)

In Our Next Issue

Triumphing Over
Satan and His Works

A Priceless Treasure to Share

Is It Weakness or Wickedness?

knowledge of Christ? Probably the flock will 'be more harmoniously joined together in love.'*

Distraction Can Damage Harmony

¹² If accurate knowledge facilitates our 'being harmoniously joined together in love,' what results from that which is "falsely called 'knowledge'"? Just the opposite—controversy, discord, and deviation from the faith. So we must guard against such false knowledge, as Paul warned Timothy. (1 Timothy 6:20, 21) Paul also wrote: "This I am saying that no man may delude you with persuasive arguments. Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ."—Colossians 2:4, 8.

¹³ The Colossian Christians were surrounded by the insidious influence of what amounted to falsely called knowledge. Many people in and around Colossae highly esteemed Greek philosophies. There were also Judaizers who wanted Christians to keep the Mosaic Law, such as its festival days and food requirements. (Colossians 2: 11, 16, 17) Paul was not against his brothers' gaining true knowledge, but they needed to look out that no one would carry them off as prey, using persuasive arguments to convince them to assume a mere human outlook on life and actions. You can appre-

* While the possibilities are almost endless, from the following examples, see what you personally can learn about Jesus that could contribute to harmony in your congregation: Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 2: 51, 52; 9:51-55; 10:20; Hebrews 10:5-9.

12. Concerning what knowledge do we need to be on guard?

13, 14. (a) Why were the Colossian brothers at risk in regard to knowledge? (b) Why might some today feel that they are not at similar risk?

ciate that if some in the congregation let their thinking and decisions be guided by such unscriptural concepts and approaches to life, it would work against harmony and love between congregation members.

¹⁴ 'Yes,' you might think, 'I see the danger the Colossians faced, but I'm not at risk of being influenced by Greek concepts, such as that of an immortal soul or a trinitarian god; nor do I see any danger of being enticed by the pagan holidays of the false religion that I escaped.' Fine. It is good to be resolved on the superiority of the simple truth revealed through Jesus and available in the Scriptures. Might it be, however, that we are at risk from other philosophies or human views prevalent today?

¹⁵ One such attitude has long been around: "Where now is the promise of his coming? Our fathers have been laid to their rest, but still everything continues exactly as it has always been." (2 Peter 3:4, *The New English Bible*) That sentiment may be formed in other words, but the outlook is the same. For instance, someone might reason, 'When I first learned the truth decades ago, the end was "right around the corner." But it still isn't here, and who knows when it will come?' Granted, no man knows when the end will arrive. Yet, notice the viewpoint Jesus urged: "Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is."—Mark 13:32, 33.

¹⁶ How dangerous it would be to adopt the view that, not knowing when the end will come, we should plan for a full and "normal" life! That approach could be reflected in the reasoning, 'I might as well take steps that will permit me (or my children) to have a respectable career that pays very well and will enable me to enjoy a comfort-

15, 16. What outlook on life might affect a Christian's thinking?

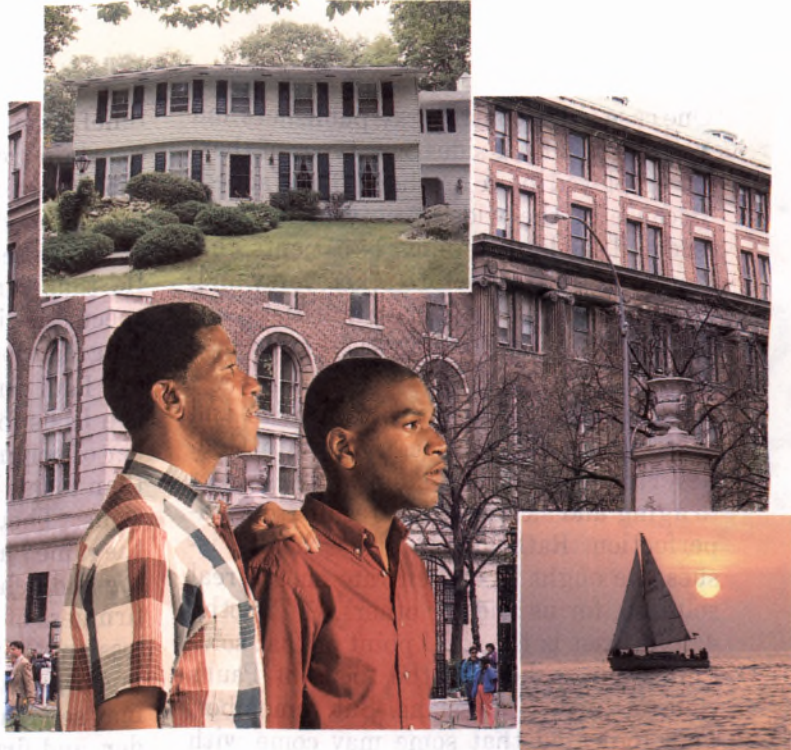
**Do your plans
for the future center
on Jesus' presence?**

able life. Of course, I will attend Christian meetings and have some share in the preaching work, but there's no reason for me to exert myself or make great sacrifices.'—Matthew 24:38-42.

¹⁷ There is no denying, however, that Jesus and his apostles recommended our living with a sense of urgency about getting the good news preached, exerting ourselves and being willing to make sacrifices. Paul wrote: "This I say, brothers, the time left is reduced. Henceforth let those who have wives be as though they had none, . . . and those who buy as those not possessing, and those making use of the world as those not using it to the full; for the scene of this world is changing."—1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Luke 13:23, 24; Philippians 3:13-15; Colossians 1:29; 1 Timothy 4:10; 2 Timothy 2:4; Revelation 22:20.

¹⁸ Far from suggesting that we make a comfortable life our goal, Paul wrote under inspiration: "We have brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out. So, having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things. . . . Fight the fine fight of the faith, get a firm hold on the everlasting life for which you were called and you offered the fine public declaration in front of many witnesses."—1 Timothy 6:7-12.

17, 18. What view did Jesus and the apostles urge us to have?



¹⁹ When a congregation is made up of zealous Christians who intensely strive to 'offer a fine public declaration,' harmony is natural. They do not give in to the attitude, 'You have many good things laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, enjoy yourself.' (Luke 12:19) Rather, they are united in the same effort, willing to make sacrifices to have as full a share as possible in this never-to-be-repeated work.—Compare Philippians 1:27, 28.

Careful About Persuasive Arguments

²⁰ There are, of course, other ways in which Christians might be 'deluded with persuasive arguments' or empty deceptions that interfere with 'being harmoniously joined in love.' The office of the Watch Tower Society in Germany wrote:

19. How is a congregation affected when those in it accept the view of life that Jesus encouraged?

20. What is another area in which Christians might be misled?

"One case led to controversy, publishers and even elders taking sides over types of therapy employed by a brother." They added: "Because of the wide variety of methods used and the large number of patients, this is an area that is open to controversy and, if therapeutic methods have spiritistic undertones, may invite danger."—Ephesians 6:12.

²¹ Christians want to remain alive and healthy so that they can worship God. Nevertheless, in this system we are subject to aging and sickness that result from imperfection. Rather than stress health issues, we ought to concentrate on the real solution, for us and for others. (1 Timothy 4:16) Christ is the focal point of that solution, even as he was the focus of Paul's counsel to the Colossians. But remember, Paul indicated that some may come with "persuasive arguments" turning our attention away from Christ, perhaps toward diagnostic methods, treatments, or diets.—Colossians 2:2-4.

²² People around the globe are barraged by advertisements and testimonials about all sorts of treatments and means of diagnosis. Some of those are widely used and recognized; others are widely criticized or subject to suspicion.* Each person is responsible to determine what he will do concerning his health. But those who accept Paul's counsel found at Colossians 2:4, 8 will have protection against being deluded by "persuasive arguments" or "empty deceptions" that lead astray many who, lacking the Kingdom hope, are desperate for

* See *The Watchtower* of June 15, 1982, pages 22-9.

21. How might a Christian lose the right focus today?

22. What balanced attitude should we have as to the numerous claims concerning methods of diagnosis and treatment?

relief. Even if a Christian is convinced that a certain treatment seems good for him, he should not promote this in the Christian brotherhood, for it could become a subject of widespread discussion and controversy. He thus can manifest that he highly respects the importance of harmony in the congregation.

²³ Paul stressed that Christian harmony is a basis for real joy. In his day the number of congregations was certainly smaller than today. Yet he could write to the Colossians: "Though I am absent in the flesh, all the same I am with you in the spirit, rejoicing and beholding your good order and the firmness of your faith toward Christ." (Colossians 2:5; see also Colossians 3:14.) How much greater our cause for rejoicing! We may see real evidence of harmony, good order, and firmness of faith in our own congregation, which reflects the general situation of God's people earth wide. So in the short remaining time in the present system, let each of us be determined to "be harmoniously joined together in love."

23. Why do we especially have cause for joy?

Did You Note?

- ☐ What is the 1995 yeartext for Jehovah's Witnesses?
- ☐ Why did the Colossian Christians need to be harmoniously joined in love, and why do we today?
- ☐ What insidious outlook on life do Christians especially need to be on guard against today?
- ☐ Why should Christians be alert not to be misled by persuasive arguments concerning health and means of diagnosis?

A Health Test for You?

Dear Brothers: I would like your opinion. A [certain health practitioner] seems to have good success, but a method she uses makes me suspicious. . . . By examination she determines what is wrong. Then to find out what kind of medicine or how much of it to use, she puts a medicine bottle next to the skin near a gland or an organ. She tries to pull down the patient's raised arm. The kind of medicine or the amount of it is determined by the force she needs to pull the arm down. The theory is that electrons, like a current, travel from the medicine through the metal cap of the bottle to a body part, strengthening it. Is this like water witching?

THIS letter from Oregon, U.S.A., concerns a practice that some use to determine nutritional needs, weigh emotional issues, assess memories, and resolve questions about daily life. However common the practice is, are the writer's suspicions justified?

Health—At What Cost?

Since ancient times, people have tried to understand why they get sick and how to get well. The Israelites had an advantage because they knew that they were sinners, and they had laws from God that helped them to avoid contracting or spreading many diseases. (Leviticus 5:2; 11:39, 40; 13:1-4; 15:4-12; Deu-



teronomy 23:12-14) Still, God's people also sought help from qualified physicians of their day.—Isaiah 1:6; 38:21; Mark 2:17; 5:25, 26; Luke 10:34; Colossians 4:14.

What a contrast to people in ancient Babylon and Egypt! Their "doctors" had some remedies based on natural ingredients, yet many of their "treatments" would now be labeled quackery. An Egyptian hieroglyphic text tells of a physician treating blindness with a vile potion of pigs' eyes, antimony,

red ocher, and honey. This concoction was poured into a sick person's ear! An ancient testimonial claims that this treatment was "really excellent." Its strangeness or

The Watch Tower Society does not make recommendations or decisions for individuals on medical and diagnostic practices. If certain practices have aspects that are questionable in the light of Bible principles, however, attention may be called to these. Then each person can weigh what is involved and decide what to do.

mystery may even have enhanced its appeal.

Babylonians and Egyptians often invoked occult powers.* A priest/physician might ask a patient to breathe into the nostrils of a sheep, believing that some force, or energy, could flow from the patient into another creature and produce an effect. The sheep was killed, and its liver supposedly could reveal the patient's sickness or his future.—Isaiah 47:1, 9-13; Ezekiel 21:21.

Of course, a God-fearing physician in ancient Israel would not have employed spiritistic practices. God wisely commanded: "There should not be found in you . . . anyone who employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer . . . For everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah." (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Leviticus 19:26; 20:27) The same applies to God's Christian servants today. Caution is in order.

In recent years many people have turned to "alternative" diagnostic techniques and treatments. This is basically an area for personal decision. (Matthew 7:1; compare Romans 14:3, 4.) It would, of course, be sad if any Christian became so preoccupied with controversial health issues that these overshadowed the ministry, which is the one sure way to save lives. (1 Timothy 4:16) The Bible does not say that in the new world sickness will be cured and perfect health achieved through medical approaches, herbs, diets, or holistic regimens. Actually, full healing will be brought about only

* Many people still consult shamans, witch doctors, or similar healers. A shaman is "a priest who uses magic for the purpose of curing the sick, divining the hidden, and controlling events." A witch doctor, or shaman, might combine herbs with spiritistic practices (invoking mysterious forces). A careful, loyal Christian would shun such involvement in spiritism, even if it seemed to offer a cure.—2 Corinthians 2:11; Revelation 2:24; 21:8; 22:15.

by means of forgiveness of sin on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice.—Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 22:1, 2.

What Forces Are Involved?

What might a Christian want to consider in making his own decision about the practice of muscle testing mentioned in the opening letter?

Certain modes of testing the strength or response of muscles are part of conventional medicine, and few would question their validity. For example, poliomyelitis can weaken muscles, and therapy for this may involve what is called kinesiology—"the study of muscles and muscular movement." Such kinesiology is also used in rehabilitative therapy for stroke victims. Most people would understand such treatment.

But what of the muscle testing described in the letter at the start of this article? This sort of "kinesiology" has been used in an attempt to find out whether certain foods, herbs, or vitamins might help or harm a person. As often practiced, the individual holds out his arm, and a practitioner presses down to test muscle strength. Next the subject puts a nutrient or other substance in his mouth, on his abdomen, or in his hand. Then the arm muscles are retested. It is claimed that if he needs that nutrient, his arm will test stronger; if it is bad for him, the muscles will be weaker.*

Some who have tried this believe it works and that the effect is based on forces within the body. They reason that there are many things that modern science cannot explain but that occur or can be observed. Thus, they claim that there might be lines of en-

* This is a general description, but the testing process may vary. For example, a subject may be asked to press his thumb and forefinger together, and the practitioner tries to pull them apart.

ergy or interaction between forces and substances, even if physicians have not yet discovered or accepted these.

On the other hand, the book *Applied Kinesiology* states: "Sometimes [books] teach that chemical substances, such as nutrition, are evaluated by holding the substance in the hand and testing the muscle. There is no evidence that suggests any reliability in this type of testing. . . . A philosophic attitude can be so strong that operator prejudice interferes with obtaining accurate information in the testing process." "An examiner who is experienced in manual muscle testing can easily make a subject's muscle appear weak or strong at his discretion by simply changing the . . . test very slightly."

Beware!

However, some muscle testing goes beyond this. Consider what is termed "surrogate testing." This might be practiced in the case of an old person or a baby too weak to be tested. While a surrogate touches the baby, the practitioner tests the *surrogate's* arm. This has even been applied to pets; the surrogate's arm is tested while he is resting a hand on the collie, German shepherd, or other sick pet.

It is not for us to judge such actions, but you might ask, 'Are bodily forces behind these effects?' Scientists have proved the existence of cosmic rays, microwaves, and various types of electromagnetic radiation. Yet, do all creatures, even infants and house

pets, have within them forces that can flow out and produce a testable effect on a second person? The Babylonians thought that forces could flow out to and affect a sheep. You might ask yourself, 'Do I believe that something similar can happen with humans or animals today? Or might the effects have another explanation?'

Some healers claim to measure a person's "forces" with such devices as met-

al spirals or pendulums. These supposedly move as the healer's "energy field" interacts with that of the patient. One practitioner and writer in this field, who had once been a research scientist, sometimes diagnoses with the use of a pendulum. She also asserts that she can visualize "the human energy field" or colored aura said to surround individuals. She claims to use "internal vision" to look into a body to see tumors, blood cells, or mi-

crobes, and to view the past.*

As noted earlier, gauging forces by means of arm strength has been used to test emotions. A widely distributed book said: "If you desire to throw [in] a slight emotional test

* She writes: "How do these seemingly miraculous events take place? . . . The process I use is called *laying-on of hands, faith healing or spiritual healing*. It is not at all a mysterious process, but very straightforward . . . Everyone has an energy field or aura that surrounds and interpenetrates the physical body. This energy field is intimately associated with health. . . . High Sense Perception is a type of 'seeing' in which you perceive a picture in your mind without the use of your normal vision. It is not imagination. It is sometimes referred to as clairvoyance."



at the same time, ask audibly 'Do you have a problem?' and retest. This will occasionally weaken the arm if the nutrition is poor." Some use such a test "to identify the age at which specific physical, emotional or spiritual trauma" occurred. It is also employed to make 'yes or no' decisions on daily matters.

Likely, many who do such muscle testing (kinesiology) would say that their practice differs from what was just described, that no spiritism is involved, or that they do no emotional testing. Nevertheless, is what they do still based on a belief in forces within each human that can be tested or seen only by certain people claiming special powers?

Christians do not take such issues lightly. God counseled Israel: "New moon and sabbath, the calling of a convention—I cannot put up with the use of uncanny power along with the solemn assembly." (Isaiah 1:13) When that nation became apostate, they were 'practicing divination and looking for omens.' (2 Kings 17:17; 2 Chronicles 33:1-6) Evidently they sought information by special rites, and then they spoke "what is uncanny."—Zechariah 10:2.

Some muscle testing may be innocent, performed with no harm to patient or practitioner. Clearly, though, some may have uncanny or supernatural aspects, such as internal vision, mysterious auras, and the use of a pendulum. Christians must not practice uncanny powers. They should not even experiment with such, for they are not curious about the deep things of Satan. (Revelation 2:24) Rather, there is good reason to exercise caution about anything that might seem related to the practice of spiritism, which God's Word condemns.—Galatians 5:19-21.

What a practitioner does is his responsibility, and it is not our intent to review

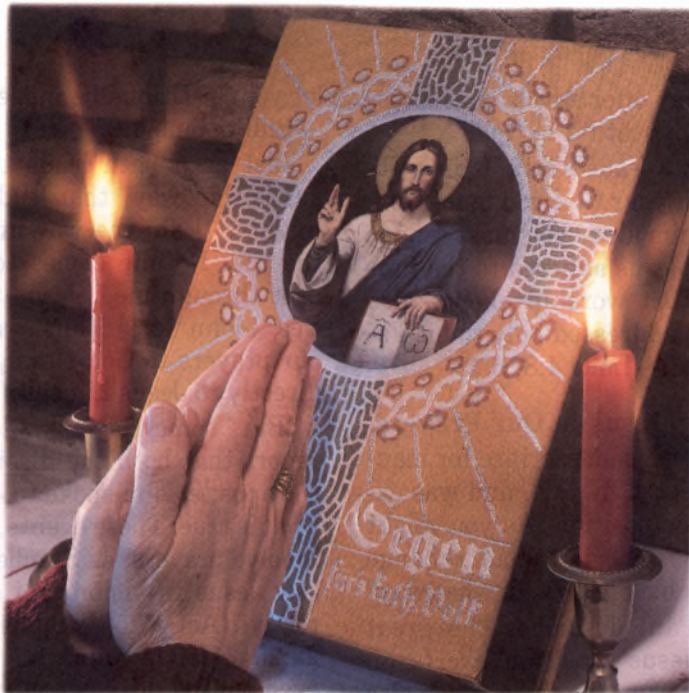
and pass judgment on each one's claims or procedures. Even if you feel that *some* of these practices do involve uncanny power, it is clear that many who tried them did so in all innocence, with no thought of involvement in spiritism. It may have been just a reflection of their desperate desire for good health. Still, some who have been involved in such practices have decided later that any potential physical benefit was not worth the spiritual risk.

Again, each individual must resolve what to do regarding such personal matters. Yet, Christians should remember God's counsel: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps." (Proverbs 14:15) That applies to health claims too.

Satan is eager to distract God's servants from true worship. The Devil would rejoice if he could do so by getting Christians fascinated with other interests. He would be even more delighted if they became fascinated with things that are, or seem to be, uncanny practices that might draw them into spiritism.—1 Peter 5:8.

Though Christians are not under the Mosaic Law, Jehovah God's attitude toward occult practices has not changed. As noted earlier, God commanded the Israelites that "anyone who employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell" was not to be found among them. "Everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah . . . You should prove yourself faultless with Jehovah."—Deuteronomy 18:10-13.

How wise it is, then, for Christians today to keep on "the complete suit of armor from God . . . because we have a wrestling . . . against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places"!—Ephesians 6:11, 12.



Should You Pray to Jesus?

SOME people consider it proper to pray to Jesus. In Germany many have been taught as children that before their meals they should fold their hands and thank Jesus Christ.

According to the Bible, Jesus indeed occupies a very high position in heaven. Does that, however, mean that we should pray to him? You may be among those who, out of love for Jesus, direct prayers to him, but what does Jesus himself think about such prayers?

First, why do these questions even arise? Because the Bible says that Jehovah God is the "Hearer of prayer." It is hardly surprising, then, that servants of God in ancient times, such as the Israelites, prayed only to Jehovah God, the Almighty.—Psalm 5:1, 2; 65:2.

Did things change when Jesus, the Son

of God, came to earth to deliver mankind from sin and death? No, prayers were still directed to Jehovah. When on earth Jesus himself prayed frequently to his heavenly Father, and he taught others to do likewise. Just think of the model prayer, sometimes called the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father, which is one of the best-known prayers in the world. Jesus did not teach us to pray to him; he gave us this model: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified."—Matthew 6:6, 9; 26:39, 42.

Now let us look at the subject more thoroughly by examining what prayer actually is.

What Is a Prayer?

Every prayer is a form of worship. *The World Book Encyclopedia* confirms this, stating: "Prayer is a form of worship in

which a person may offer devotion, thanks, confession, or supplication to God.”

On one occasion Jesus said: “It is written, ‘It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.’” Jesus adhered to the fundamental truth that worship—hence also prayers—is to be addressed only to his Father, Jehovah God.—Luke 4:8; 6:12.

Acknowledging Jesus in Our Prayers

Jesus died as a ransom sacrifice for mankind, was resurrected by God, and was exalted to a superior position. As you might imagine, all of this did bring about a change regarding acceptable prayers. In what way?

The apostle Paul describes the great influence that Jesus’ position exerts on prayer as follows: “For this very reason also God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground, and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”—Philippians 2:9-11.

Do the words “*in the name of Jesus every knee should bend*” mean that we are to pray to him? No. The Greek phrase here involved “denotes the name upon which those that bow the knee unite, on which united all (*πάν γόνυ*) worship. The name which Jesus has received moves all to united adoration.” (*A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament*, by G. B. Winer) Indeed, for a prayer to be acceptable, it must be presented “in the name of Jesus,” but it is, nevertheless, addressed to Jehovah God and serves to his glorification. For this reason, Paul says: “In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving

let your petitions be made known to God.”—Philippians 4:6.

Just as a path leads to a goal, so Jesus is the “way” that leads to God the Almighty. “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,” Jesus taught the apostles. (John 14:6) Thus, we should present our prayers to God through Jesus and not directly to Jesus himself.*

‘But,’ some may ask, ‘does the Bible not report that both the disciple Stephen and the apostle John spoke to Jesus in heaven?’ That is true. These events, however, did not involve prayers, as Stephen and John each saw Jesus in vision and spoke to him directly. (Acts 7:56, 59; Revelation 1:17-19; 22:20) Bear in mind that simply speaking even to God does not in itself constitute a prayer. Adam and Eve spoke to God, offering excuses for their great sin, when He judged them following their sin in Eden. Their talking to him in that way was not a prayer. (Genesis 3:8-19) Hence, it would be incorrect to cite Stephen’s or John’s talking to Jesus as evidence that we actually should pray to him.

How Is the Name of Jesus ‘Called Upon’?

Do you have lingering doubts, still considering it proper to pray to Jesus? One woman wrote to a branch office of the Watch Tower Society: “Unfortunately, I am still not convinced that the first Christians did not pray to Jesus.” She had in mind Paul’s words at 1 Corinthians 1:2, where he mentioned “all who everywhere are *calling upon* the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

* Some might pray to Jesus because they believe that he is God. But Jesus was the *Son of God*, and he himself worshiped Jehovah, his Father. (John 20:17) For a detailed discussion of this subject, see *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

One should note, however, that in the original language, the expression “to call upon” can mean things other than prayer.

How was the name of Christ ‘called upon’ everywhere? One way was that the followers of Jesus of Nazareth openly acknowledged him to be the Messiah and “Savior of the world,” performing many miraculous acts in his name. (1 John 4:14; Acts 3:6; 19:5) Therefore, *The Interpreter’s Bible* states that the phrase “to call on the name of our Lord . . . means to confess his lordship rather than to pray to him.”

Accepting Christ and exercising faith in his shed blood, which make the forgiveness of sins possible, also constitute a “calling upon the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” (Compare Acts 10:43 with 22:16.) And we literally say Jesus’ name whenever we pray to God through him. So, while showing that we can call upon the name of Jesus, the Bible does not indicate that we should pray to him.—Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17.

What Jesus Can Do for Us

Jesus clearly promised his disciples: “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.” Does this require praying to him? No. The asking is addressed to Jehovah God—but in Jesus’ name. (John 14:13, 14; 15:16) We petition God that His Son, Jesus, apply his great power and authority in our behalf.

How does Jesus communicate with his true followers today? Paul’s description of the congregation of anointed Christians may serve as an illustration. He compared it to a body and Jesus Christ to the head. The “head” supplies the members of the spiritual body with their needs by way of “joints and ligaments,” or the means and arrangements for supplying his congregation with spiritual nourishment and direction. (Colossians 2:19) In a similar way, Jesus today uses “gifts in men,” or spir-

itually qualified men, to take the lead in the congregation, even administering correction if it becomes necessary. There is no provision for members of the congregation to communicate directly with Jesus or to pray to him, but they certainly should—yes, must—pray to Jesus’ Father, Jehovah God.—Ephesians 4:8-12.

How Do You Honor Jesus?

Concerning the salvation of humans, what a key role Jesus occupies! The apostle Peter exclaimed: “There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved.” (Acts 4:12) Are you aware of the importance of Jesus’ name?

By not directing prayers to Jesus personally, we are not degrading his position. Rather, Jesus is honored when we pray in his name. And just as children honor their parents by being obedient, we honor Jesus Christ by obeying his commandments, especially the new commandment to love one another.—John 5:23; 13:34.

Acceptable Prayers

Do you desire to offer acceptable prayers? Then direct them to Jehovah God, and do so in the name of his Son, Jesus. Come to know God’s will, and let your prayers reflect that understanding. (1 John 3:21, 22; 5:14) Draw strength from the words of Psalm 66:20: “Blessed be God, who has not turned aside my prayer, nor his loving-kindness from me.”

As we have seen, prayers are a form of worship that belongs exclusively to Almighty God. By addressing all our prayers to Jehovah God, we indicate that we have taken to heart Jesus’ direction to pray: “Our Father in the heavens.”—Matthew 6:9.

Tragedy in Rwanda

Who Is Responsible?



"In the moment before the 23-year-old mechanic's skull was hacked open," *U.S. News & World Report* said, "one of the attackers told Hitiyise: 'You have to die because you are a Tutsi.'"

HOW often such a scene was repeated in the small Central African country of Rwanda during the months of April and May! At the time there were 15 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in and around Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda. The city overseer, Ntabana Eugène, was a Tutsi. He, his wife, his son, and his nine-year-old daughter, Shami, were among the first persons slaughtered when the rampage of violence erupted.

Thousands of Rwandans were murdered daily—week after week. "In the last six weeks," the above-quoted newsmagazine reported in mid-May, "as many as 250,000 people have died in a campaign of genocide and retribution that rivals the Khmer Rouge's bloody purge of Cambodia in the mid-1970s."

Time magazine said: "In a scene reminiscent of Nazi Germany, the children were picked out of a group of 500 simply because they looked like Tutsi. . . . The mayor of the southern town of Butare, who is married to a Tutsi, was offered [an agonizing] choice by Hutu peasants: he could save his wife and children if he gave up his wife's family—both her parents and her sister—to be killed. He made the deal."

Six persons worked in the Translation Office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kigali, four of them Hutu and two Tutsi. The Tutsi were Ananie Mbanda and Mukagisagara Denise. When the militia along with looters came

to the house, they became angry at finding Hutu and Tutsi residing together. They wanted to kill Mbanda and Denise.

"They started to take the pins out of their grenades," said Emmanuel Ngirente, one of the Hutu brothers, "threatening to kill us, since we had among us their enemies. . . . They wanted a large sum of money. We gave them all the money we had on us, but they were not satisfied. They decided to take from us as compensation everything they could use, including a laptop computer used in our translation work, our photocopier, our radios, our shoes, and so forth. Suddenly they left without killing any of us, but they said they would come back later."

In the days that followed, the looters kept returning, and each time the Hutu Witnesses pleaded for the lives of their Tutsi friends. Finally, when it became too dangerous for Mbanda and Denise to stay any longer, arrangements were made for them to go with other Tutsi refugees to a nearby school. When the school was attacked, Mbanda and Denise were able to flee. They succeeded in crossing several roadblocks, but, eventually, at one of them, all the Tutsi were taken aside, and Mbanda and Denise were killed.

When the soldiers returned to the Translation Office and discovered that the Tutsi Witnesses were gone, the soldiers gave the Hutu brothers a terrible beating. Then a mortar exploded nearby, and the brothers managed to escape with their lives.

As the killing continued throughout the country, the number of dead reached a possible half million. Eventually, between two and three million, or more, of Rwanda's eight million inhabitants left their homes. Many of them sought refuge in nearby Zaire and Tanzania. Some hundreds of Jehovah's Witnesses were killed, and many others were among those who fled to camps outside the country.

What ignited such unprecedented slaughter and exodus? Could it have been prevented? What was the situation before the violence erupted?

The Hutu and the Tutsi

Both Rwanda and the neighboring country of Burundi are populated by the Hutu, a generally short, stocky Bantu people, and the Tutsi, a normally taller, lighter-skinned people who are also known as Watusi. In both countries the Hutu make up about 85 percent of the population and the Tutsi 14 percent. Clashes between these ethnic groups have been recorded as far back as the 15th century. Yet, for the most part, they have lived together peacefully.

"We used to live together in peace," a 29-year-old woman said of the 3,000 Hutu and Tutsi living in the village of Ruganda, located a few miles east of Zaire. However, in April raids by gangs of Hutu wiped out nearly the entire Tutsi population of the village. *The New York Times* explained:

"The story of this village is the story of Rwanda: Hutu and Tutsi living together, intermarrying, not caring or not even knowing who was a Hutu and who a Tutsi.

"Then something snapped. In April, Hutu mobs throughout the country went on a rampage, killing Tutsi wherever they found them. When the killings began, Tutsi fled to churches for protection. The mobs followed,

turning sanctuaries into cemeteries that remain splattered with blood."

What had ignited the killing? It was the deaths, in a plane crash in Kigali on April 6, of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, both of whom were Hutu. This event somehow unleashed the slaughter not only of Tutsi but also of any Hutu who were thought to have sympathized with them.

At the same time, fighting intensified between the rebel forces—the Tutsi-dominated R.P.F. (Rwandan Patriotic Front)—and the Hutu-dominated Government forces. By July the R.P.F. had defeated the Government forces and had gained control of Kigali and much of the rest of Rwanda. Fearing reprisals, early in July, Hutu by the hundreds of thousands fled the country.

Who Is Responsible?

When asked to explain why the violence suddenly erupted in April, a Tutsi farmer said: "It is because of bad leaders."

Indeed, throughout the centuries, political leaders have spread lies about their enemies. Under the direction of "the ruler of this world," Satan the Devil, worldly politicians have persuaded their own people to fight against and kill those of another race, tribe, or nation. (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19) The situation has been no different in Rwanda. *The New York Times* said: "Politicians have repeatedly tried to foster ethnic loyalty and ethnic fears—in the case of the Hutu, to keep control of the Government; in the case of the Tutsi, to marshal support for the rebel front."

Since the people of Rwanda are similar in many ways, one would never expect them to hate and kill one another. "The Hutu and the Tutsi speak the same language and generally share the same traditions," wrote

reporter Raymond Bonner. "After many generations of intermarriage, the physical differences—the Tutsi tall and thin, the Hutu shorter and broader—have disappeared to such an extent that Rwandans are often not sure whether someone is a Hutu or Tutsi."

Yet, the recent barrage of propaganda has had an unbelievable effect. Illustrating the matter, Alex de Waal, director of the group African Rights, said: "Peasants in areas overrun by the R.P.F. are reportedly astonished that the Tutsi soldiers do not have horns, tails and eyes that glow in the dark—such is the content of the radio broadcasts they listen to."

Not only do political leaders mold people's thinking but religion does too. What are the major religions of Rwanda? Have they also been responsible for the tragedy?

Religion's Role

The World Book Encyclopedia (1994) says of Rwanda: "Most of the people are Roman Catholics. . . . The Roman Catholic and other Christian churches operate most of the elementary and high schools." The *National Catholic Reporter*, in fact, called Rwanda a "70% Catholic nation."

The Observer, of Great Britain, gives background to the religious situation in Rwanda, explaining: "During the 1930s, when the churches were battling for control of the education system, the Catholics favoured the Tutsi aristocracy while the Protestants allied themselves with the oppressed Hutu majority. In 1959 the Hutus seized power and rapidly came to enjoy the support of Catholics and Protestants. Protestant support for the Hutu majority remains very strong."

Have Protestant church leaders, for example, condemned the massacres? *The Ob-*

server answers: "Two churchmen [Anglicans] were asked whether they condemned the murderers who had filled the aisles of Rwanda's churches with the bodies of decapitated children.

"They refused to answer. They dodged questions, became agitated, their voices reaching an even higher pitch, and the deep root of Rwanda's crisis was laid bare—the most senior members of the Anglican church acting as errand boys for political masters who have preached murder and filled the rivers with blood."

Indeed, Christendom's churches in Rwanda are no different from churches elsewhere. For example, of their support of political leaders in World War I, British Brigadier General Frank P. Crozier said: "The Christian Churches are the finest blood-lust creators which we have and of them we made free use."

Yes, religious leaders bear a large share of the responsibility for what has happened! The *National Catholic Reporter* of June 3, 1994, reported: "The fighting in the African nation involves 'a real and true genocide for which, unfortunately, even Catholics are responsible,' the pope said."

Clearly, the churches have failed to teach true Christian principles, based on such scriptures as Isaiah 2:4 and Matthew 26:52. According to the French newspaper *Le Monde*, a priest lamented: "They are slaughtering one another, all the while forgetting that they are brothers." Another Rwandan priest confessed: "Christians have been killed by other Christians, after a century of sermons on love and forgiveness. It has been a failure." *Le Monde* asked: "How can one avoid thinking that the Tutsi and Hutu who are at war in Burundi and Rwanda were trained by the same Christian missionaries and attended the same churches?"

True Christians Are Different

The true followers of Jesus Christ abide by his command to "love one another." (John 13:34) Can you imagine Jesus or one of his apostles taking a machete and hacking someone to death? Such lawless killing identifies people as "the children of the Devil."—1 John 3:10-12.

Jehovah's Witnesses take no part whatsoever in the wars, revolutions, or any other conflicts promoted by the world's politicians, who are under the control of Satan the Devil. (John 17:14, 16; 18:36; Revelation 12:9) Rather, Jehovah's Witnesses demonstrate genuine love for one another. Thus, during the massacres, Hutu Witnesses willingly put their lives in jeopardy in efforts to protect their Tutsi brothers.

Yet, such tragedies should not be surprising. In Jesus' prophecy concerning "the conclusion of the system of things," he foretold: "Then people . . . will kill you." (Matthew 24:3, 9) Happily, Jesus promises that faithful ones will be remembered in the resurrection of the dead.—John 5:28, 29.

In the meantime, Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda and everywhere else are determined to continue proving themselves Christ's disciples by loving one another. (John 13:35) Their love is giving a witness even in the midst of these present hardships, as the accompanying report "Witnesses in Refugee Camps" reveals. All of us need to remember what Jesus said in his prophecy: "He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved."—Matthew 24:13.

WITNESSES IN REFUGEE CAMPS

As of July this year, about 4,700 Witnesses and their companions were in refugee camps. In Zaire, 2,376 were in Goma, 454 in Bukavu, and 1,592 in Uvira. In addition, there were in Tanzania some 230 in Benaco.

Just getting to refugee centers was not easy. One congregation of 60 Witnesses tried to cross the Rusumo bridge, a main escape route to refugee camps in Tanzania. When they were refused passage, they wandered along the banks of the river for a week. Then they decided to try to cross in canoes. They made it, and after a few days, they safely reached the camp in Tanzania.

Jehovah's Witnesses in other countries organized large relief efforts. Witnesses in France collected over a hundred tons of clothes and nine tons of shoes, and such sup-

plies, along with nutritional supplements and medicines, were shipped to areas in need. Often, the first thing brothers in the refugee camps asked for, however, was a Bible or a *Watchtower* or *Awake!* magazine.

Many observers were impressed by the love shown by Witnesses in Zaire and Tanzania, who visited and helped their displaced brothers. "You have received visits from people in your religion," refugees say, "but we have not been visited by a priest from ours."

The Witnesses became well-known in the camps, largely because of their unity, orderliness, and loving disposition. (John 13:35) It is of interest to note that in Benaco, Tanzania, it took the Witnesses only 15 minutes to locate fellow Witness refugees among some 250,000 people in the camp.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

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

□ **Why do Jehovah's Witnesses continue to call on their neighbors?**

Jehovah's Witnesses themselves want God's blessing through the promised Kingdom, and out of love for their neighbors, they want the same blessing for them. Thus, following Jesus' example, they feel compelled by unselfish love to visit their neighbors. (Matthew 6:9, 10; 22:37-39)—8/15, pages 8, 9.

□ **Why is belief in evolution a matter of faith?**

Scientists have never seen mutations—even beneficial ones—produce new life-forms, yet evolutionists claim that this is how new species arrived. Evolutionists have not witnessed spontaneous generation of life, yet they insist that this is how life began.—9/1, page 5.

□ **How can we best overcome discouragement that may come from restrictions in life?**

Whatever our situation, if we concentrate on what we can do rather than fret about what we cannot do, life will be more satisfying, and we will find joy in God's service. (Psalm 126:5, 6)—9/1, page 28.

□ **What are the benefits of forgiving?**

Forgiving others promotes good relations (Ephesians 4:32); it brings not only peace with fellow humans but inner peace as well (Romans 14:19; Colossians 3:13-15); forgiving others clears the way for our sins to be forgiven (Matthew 6:14); also, it helps us to remember that we ourselves are in need of forgiveness. (Romans 3:23)—9/15, page 7.

□ **How does the example of the prophet Amos help us in our preaching activity?**

Like Amos, we neither change nor water down God's message. Instead, we obediently declare it regardless of the reaction of our hearers.—9/15, page 17.

□ **What characteristics of God should we imitate?**

Two significant ones are Jehovah's organizational ability and his happiness. (1 Corinthians 14:33; 1 Timothy 1:11) These qualities of God are balanced, so that one of them is not made paramount at the expense of the other.—10/1, page 10.

□ **What are some positive steps parents have taken to help their children serve Jehovah?**

A vital key is to start early. Impressions received and lessons learned during tender years will last for a lifetime. (Proverbs 22:6) It is important to teach them obedience and respect for Jehovah and his worship at all meetings. Successful parents learn to recognize wrong tendencies, and they help their children to correct them. (Proverbs 22:15) Finally, start early to set theocratic goals for your child that he can reasonably achieve.—10/1, pages 27-8.

□ **What distinctive feature of Jehovah's forgiveness should we try to put into practice?**

Jehovah both forgives and forgets. (Jeremiah 31:34) This is difficult for human creatures to do. The importance of doing so was emphasized by Jesus, as recorded at Matthew 6:14, 15.—10/15, pages 25-6.

□ **What are three obstacles to our becoming compassionate?**

Because of our sinful human nature, feelings of envy can take root. If we become envious of someone, how can we treat him with tender compassion? Unnecessary exposure to violence is another obstacle. This tends to make us unfeeling toward the suffering of others. Furthermore, a self-centered person is likely to lack compassion. (1 John 3:17)—11/1, pages 19, 20.

□ **What lessons can be learned from the Scriptural account regarding Job?**

The account of Job makes us more aware of Satan's devices and helps us to see how Jehovah's universal sovereignty is related to human integrity. Like Job, all who love God must be tested. We too can endure as Job did, prove Satan a liar, and enjoy the blessings of God's Kingdom.—11/15, page 20.

□ **How can the chairman of a body of elders show proper recognition to each elder?**

Whenever possible the chairman should provide an agenda far enough in advance to allow the other elders time to give careful and prayerful thought to each item featured. At the elders' meeting, he will not try to shape the opinion of the elders but encourage them to exercise "freeness of speech" on matters under discussion. (1 Timothy 3:13)—12/1, page 30.

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"The peace of God that excels all thought"

THROUGHOUT history, faithful servants of God have undergone periods of intense emotional anguish. How much more is this true today, since we live in "critical times hard to deal with"! (2 Timothy 3:1) The apostle Paul counseled Christians to throw their anxieties on Jehovah through prayer. With what result? "The peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus."—Philippians 4:7.

What is this "peace of God"? It is a calmness that comes from having a close relationship with the Creator. Such intimacy gives us confidence that, regardless of our distresses, Jehovah "will not abandon his people; he will not desert those who belong to him."—Psalm 94:14, *Today's English Version*.

This does not mean that we are immune to adversity. "Many are the calamities of the righteous one," wrote the psalmist. (Psalm 34:19) But the peace of God can bring relief. How?

The peace of God "excels all thought," wrote Paul—or as rendered in the *Concordant Version*, it is "superior to every mental state." Anxiety can cause us to experience a wide range of distressing emotions. (Ecclesiastes 7:7) Yet, the peace of God can stabilize us, especially when we need "power beyond what is normal."—2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:7.

Furthermore, the peace of God is a protection. It can "guard your hearts and your mental powers," as Paul wrote to the Philippians. The Greek word translated "guard" is a military term that likely evoked a mental picture of sentries maintaining a day-and-night watch. In the same way, the peace of God can act as a 24-hour guard over our hearts and our mental powers.—1 Corinthians 10:13; compare Ephesians 4:26.

Considering the stressful challenges we face today, is not the peace of God something for which to be thankful?—Psalm 18:2; compare Exodus 40:38.

