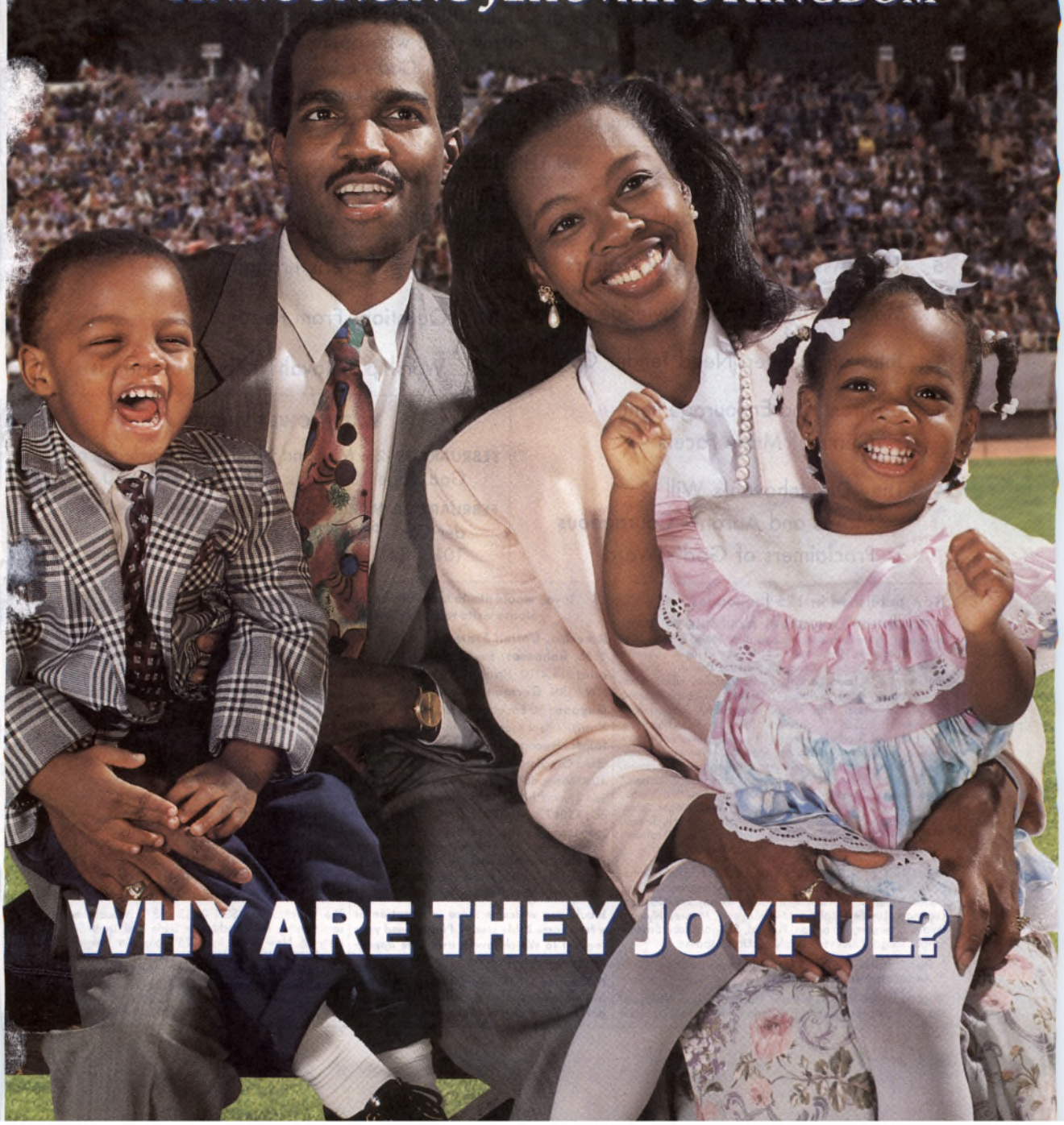
JANUARY 15, 1996

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHY ARE THEY JOYFUL?

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.

IN THIS ISSUE

3 Joyful in a Joyless World

5 They Assembled as Joyful Praisers

10 Mankind Needs the Knowledge of God

15 Jehovah's Sheep Need Tender Care

21 Comfort and Encouragement —Gems of Many Facets

24 They Did Jehovah's Will Moses and Aaron—Courageous Proclaimers of God's Word

26 Light Ends an Age of Darkness

30 A Legal Breakthrough

31 Questions From Readers

32 Worship Jehovah With Clean Hands

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

FEBRUARY 19-25: Mankind Needs the Knowledge of God. Page 10. *Songs to be used:* 198, 180.

FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 3: Jehovah's Sheep Need Tender Care. Page 15. *Songs to be used:* 101, 184.

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JOYFUL IN A JOYLESS WORLD

"AT ITS worst, this has been Satan's century," began an editorial in *The New York Times* of January 26, 1995. "In no previous age have people shown so great an aptitude, and appetite, for killing millions of other people for reasons of race, religion or class."

The 50th anniversary of the liberation of innocent victims imprisoned in the Nazi death camps prompted editorials such as the foregoing. However, the same type of savage killings still take place in parts of Africa and Eastern Europe.

Pogroms, ethnic cleansings, tribal

slaughters—whatever they are called—result in great sorrow. Yet, amid such mayhem rise strong voices of joy. For example, let us look at Germany in the 1930's.

By April of 1935, Jehovah's Witnesses were banned from all civil service jobs by Hitler and his Nazi party. The Witnesses were also arrested, imprisoned, and sent to concentration camps because they maintained Christian neutrality. (John 17:16) In late August of 1936, there were mass arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses. Thousands of them were sent to concentration camps, where most of them remained until 1945 if they survived. How, though, did the Witnesses react to the inhuman treatment meted out to them in the camps? Surprising as it may seem, they were able to maintain joy despite their joyless surroundings.

Maria Hombach

"A Rock in the Mud"

British historian Christine King interviewed a Catholic woman who was in the camps. "She used a phrase I've never forgotten," said Dr. King. "She talked in great detail about the horror of the life, the disgusting conditions in which she lived. And she said she knew Witnesses, and those Witnesses were a rock in the mud. Some firm place in all that slime. She said that they were the only people who didn't spit when the guards walked past. They were the only people who didn't deal with all this by hatred but by love and hope and the feeling that there was a purpose."

What enabled Jehovah's Witnesses to be 'rocks in the mud'? Unshakable faith in Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, Hitler's efforts failed to stifle their Christian love and joy.

Listen as two camp survivors reminisce five decades after they successfully met this test of faith. Says one: "I bubble over with joy in knowing that I had the unique privilege of proving my love and gratefulness to Jehovah under the cruelest of circumstances. No one forced me to do this! On the contrary, the ones who tried to force us were our enemies who tried by threats to get us to obey Hitler more than God—but without success! Not only am I happy now but, because of a good conscience, I was happy even while behind prison walls."—Maria Hombach, 94 years old.

Another Witness states: "I look back on my days of imprisonment with gratefulness and joy. The years spent under Hitler in prisons and concentration camps were difficult and full of tests. But I would not want to have missed them, for they taught me to trust in Jehovah absolutely."—Johannes Neubacher, 91 years old.

"To trust in Jehovah absolutely"—that was the secret of the joy experienced by Jehovah's Witnesses. Thus, they are joyful, although they are surrounded by a joyless world. Their joy was evident at the "Joyful Praisers" District Conventions in recent months. Let us briefly review these joyous gatherings.

THEY ASSEMBLED AS JOYFUL PRAISERS

JEHOVAH GOD'S ancient people were commanded to "become nothing but joyful" when they assembled for worship. (Deuteronomy 16:15) The "Joyful Praisers" District Conventions of 1995/96 surely have given Jehovah's Witnesses good reasons for joy.

Since this series of conventions began, they have built faith. They have also showed how to find joy in a joyless world. Let us consider the convention one day at a time.

'Praise Jehovah, You People . . . Be Joyful!'

The above theme of the convention's first day was based on Psalm 149:1, 2. The discourse "We Have Reason to Cry Out for Joy" examined the application of the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 35. It had a fulfillment in ancient Israel and especially in our day with the restoration of worshipers of Jehovah to prosperity and health in a spiritual paradise. Thus, the conventioners had reason to cry out for joy over what God has purposed for his people in a spiritual paradise and in the forthcoming physical Paradise so near at hand.

The keynote address, "Set Apart as Joyful Praisers Worldwide," answered the question: What sets us apart from this world? It is our united worship of Jehovah. No matter where Jehovah's Witnesses live on this earth, they speak and teach in agreement. They rejoice, too, in Jehovah's grand purpose to sanctify his holy name and to vindicate his sovereignty by means of his Kingdom. How, though, does Jehovah help us to have a place in his purpose? He has entrusted us with the truth of his holy Word. God has given us his holy spirit. He has blessed us with a worldwide brotherhood and an arrangement for pure worship. Our international family helps us to serve Jehovah with great joy of heart.

"Keeping Separate and Without Spot From the World" emphasized the need to avoid the spots of partiality and class distinctions. (James 2:5-9) Some may socialize only with those of a similar background or financial status, neglecting fellow Christians who are poor or disadvantaged. Others may tend to favor those who have positions of responsibility in the congregation. They forget that the greatest privilege anyone can have is that of being a Witness of Jehovah. Therefore, we must not allow worldly tendencies to spot us and to disrupt the peace of the congregation.—2 Peter 3:14.

The talk "Am I Prepared to Get Married?" pointed out that many enter marriage hastily. Some get married to escape a difficult situation at home or because their peers are marrying. However, valid reasons for marriage include a mutual desire to pursue theocratic goals, genuine love, a need for companionship and security, and the desire to raise children. Spiritual training is essential in preparation for marriage. Among other things, there is a need to build desirable qualities by putting on the new personality. It is also wise to ascertain whether a prospective mate gives evidence of having a real relationship with Jehovah

and deals respectfully with others. Seeking counsel from mature Christians is also wise. —Proverbs 11:14.

This enlightening discussion was followed by one entitled "Parents Who Find Pleasure in Their Children." The birth of a child is usually a time of great rejoicing. However, bearing children also brings great responsibility. (Psalm 127:3) Thus, it is important that children be taught to love Jehovah. Parents can do this by regularly speaking about Jehovah to their children and by applying the principles of his Word in the family.

Day one of the convention ended with a surprise—the release of the new brochure *Jehovah's Witnesses and Education*. It clearly explains that Witnesses "encourage their youngsters to work hard and to take seriously the tasks assigned to them at school." This publication also explains the remarkable results of the literacy classes Jehovah's Witnesses have conducted for many years in Nigeria, Mexico, and other countries. The brochure should help educators to see that we attach great importance to education.

"Always Offer to God a Sacrifice of Praise"

The foregoing theme of day two was based on Hebrews 13:15. The morning program presented a symposium on "Answering the Call to Praise Jehovah." Age is no barrier to answering this call. Psalm 148: 12, 13 urges young men, virgins, old men, and boys to praise Jehovah. Many of Jehovah's joyful servants have been able to increase their praise. Worldwide, more than 600,000 share in the full-time preaching activity, or pioneer service. More than 15,000 engage in special pioneer work, and upwards of 15,000 are in Bethel service.

"Serving Loyally With Jehovah's Organization" was a talk that showed that loyalty is vital for God's servants. To be loyal to Jehovah means to stick to him with devotion so strong that it acts like a powerful adhesive. Loyalty requires that we avoid deliberately violating Bible commands, whether others see us or not. It also requires that we loyally uphold the Bible teachings found in the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines as well as all other spiritual food provided by the Watch Tower Society. This talk was followed by the baptism discourse. What joy there was when baptismal candidates gave evidence of their dedication to Jehovah!

The words of Hosea 4:1-3 set the pattern for the afternoon talk "Virtue or Vice —Which Do You Pursue?" Although the world's view of virtue has deteriorated, Christians must put forth "earnest effort" to pursue moral excellence. (2 Peter 1:5) This begins with how a person thinks. If his thoughts are virtuous, he will speak clean, wholesome, and upbuilding words and will strive to be honest in his dealings with others. Pursuing virtue also involves striving to be understanding and compassionate toward a fellow Christian who is suffering from distress or depression.—1 Thessalonians 5:14.

Another talk, "Guard Against Snares of the Devil," warned Christians against exposing themselves to demonic influences. In the field of treatment for sickness, Christians need to be watchful of techniques, such as hypnotism, that savor of the occult. Otherwise, what individuals do to take care of their physical health is a personal matter.

The second day ended with a joyous surprise—the release of a new pocket-sized publication designed to help honesthearted persons progress quickly to dedication and baptism. This new 192-page book is entitled *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. The *Knowledge* book presents

Families will benefit from the brochure "Jehovah's Witnesses and Education"

the truth in an upbuilding way. It does not dwell on disproving false doctrines. Clarity of language and logical development should make it easy to use this book to conduct Bible studies and help people to get a grasp of the heartwarming knowledge of God.

"Exult, You People, and Be Joyful Forever"

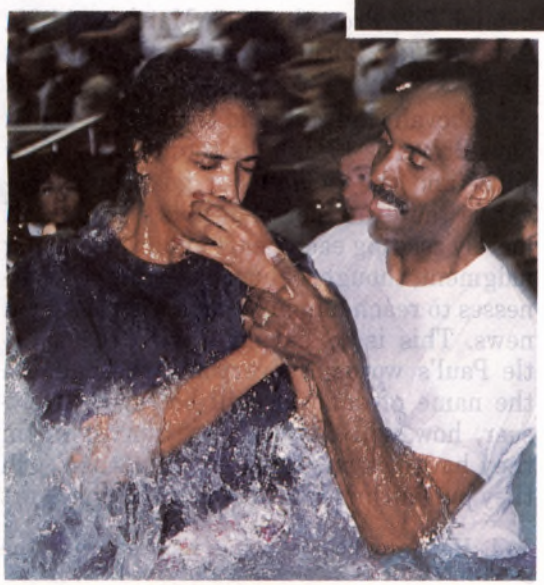
These words from Isaiah 65:18 were the theme of the convention's third day. The fulfillment of Bible prophecy points to 1914 as the year when this wicked system entered its last days. Hence, the symposium of talks entitled "Joyful Praisers During This System's Conclusion" held the rapt attention of the audience. The speakers showed how billions are swept along with the greedy and violent spirit of the world. In time, they will come into judgment as part of the world of which Satan is the ruler. Thus, now is the time to make a choice. Which side do we want to be on? Do we want to worship Jehovah and uphold his sovereignty, or are we going to allow Satan to be our ruler by doing the things pleasing to him? All of us should take our stand unequivocally on Jehovah's side.

The new book, "Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life," presents Bible truths in an upbuilding way

The convention's public discourse, "Praise the King of Eternity!" gave all in attendance solid food for thought. Although the idea of eternity seems beyond the understanding of frail humans, Jehovah fully understands it. "Jehovah is King to time indefinite, even forever," sang the psalmist. (Psalm 10:16) This King of eternity has opened the way for mankind to enjoy life eternal through his Son, Jesus Christ. (John 17:3) "Yes, we sinful humans may attain to everlasting life through divine education and faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice," said the speaker.

As the convention drew to a close, those in attendance were built up by the final talk, entitled "Joyfully Praise Jehovah From Day to Day." It was heartening to receive reports of the advancement of the disciple-making work throughout the earth. And conventioners were moved to 'bless Jehovah all day and praise his name forever.'—Psalm 145:2.

Many were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah



Conventioners were deeply moved by the drama "Honoring Worthy Ones in Their Older Years"

Unspeakable acts of inhumanity rob the world of joy. Nevertheless, individuals with full faith in Jehovah can possess godly joy. As a worldwide brotherhood, Jehovah's Witnesses can therefore repeat the following words of Psalm 35:27, 28: "Let those cry out joyfully and rejoice who are delighting in my righteousness, and let them say constantly: 'Let Jehovah be magnified, who takes delight in the peace of his servant.' And let my own tongue utter in an undertone your righteousness, all day long your praise."

MANKIND NEEDS THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

"You will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God."—PROVERBS 2:5.

SOME 5,600,000,000 human hearts are beating on earth right now. Every day, your own heart beats 100,000 times and pumps the equivalent of 2,000 gallons of blood through your body's 60,000-mile cardiovascular system. No other muscle works harder than this masterpiece of divine engineering.

[2] There are also 5,600,000,000 figurative hearts at work on earth. In the figurative heart dwell our emotions, our motivations, our desires. It is the seat of our thought, our understanding, our will. The figurative heart can be proud or humble, gloomy or cheerful, darkened or enlightened.—Nehemiah 2:2; Proverbs 16:5; Matthew 11:29; Acts 14:17; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 1:16-18.

[3] Jehovah God can read the human heart. Says Proverbs 17:3: "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but Jehovah is the examiner of hearts." Instead of merely reading each heart and pronouncing judgment, though, Jehovah is using his Witnesses to reach human hearts with the good news. This is in harmony with the apostle Paul's words: "'Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.' However, how will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? How, in turn, will they put faith in him of whom they have not

1. Why can it be said that the human heart is a masterpiece of divine engineering?
2. How would you describe the figurative heart?

3, 4. How are hearts being reached with the good news?

heard? How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach? How, in turn, will they preach unless they have been sent forth? Just as it is written: 'How comely are the feet of those who declare good news of good things!' "—Romans 10:13-15.

[4] It has pleased Jehovah to send his Witnesses to the ends of the earth to "declare good news of good things" and to find those having receptive hearts. We now number over 5,000,000—a ratio of 1 Witness to some 1,200 people on earth. Reaching earth's billions with the good news is not easy. But God is directing this work through Jesus Christ and is drawing the honesthearted. Thus, the prophecy recorded at Isaiah 60:22 is proving true: "The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time."

[5] That time is now, and one thing is clear —earth's billions need knowledge. Basically, knowledge is familiarity with facts acquired by experience, observation, or study. The world has accumulated much knowledge. Progress has been made in such fields as transportation, health care, and communication. But is it worldly knowledge that mankind really needs? Hardly! Warfare, oppression, disease, and death continue to plague mankind. The world's wisdom has often proved to be much like shifting sands in a desert storm.

[6] To illustrate: A couple of centuries ago, it was customary to resort to bloodletting as a supposed cure. George Washington, the first president of the United States, was bled repeatedly in the final hours of his life. At one point he said: "Let me go off quietly; I cannot last long." He was right, for he died that very day—December 14, 1799. Instead of bloodletting, today there is emphasis on transfusing blood *into* the human body. Both procedures have been fraught with death-dealing problems. All along, however, God's Word has said: "Keep abstaining . . . from blood." (Acts 15:29) The knowledge of God is always right, reliable, up-to-date.

[7] Consider another example of unreliable worldly wisdom. For years psychologists advocated permissive child rearing, but one of its advocates later admitted that this was a mistake. The German Philological Association once said that permissiveness is "at least indirectly responsible for the problems we now have with young people." Worldly wisdom may sway to and fro as though buffeted by winds, but accurate Scriptural knowledge has been unshakable. The Bible gives balanced counsel on child training. "Chastise your son and he will bring you rest and give much pleasure to your soul," says Proverbs 29:17. Such discipline is to be administered with love, for Paul wrote: "Fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Ephesians 6:4.

"The Very Knowledge of God"

[8] Though Paul was an educated man, he said: "If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this system of things, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Corinthians 3:18, 19) Only God can

5. What is knowledge, and what can be said of the world's wisdom?
6. With regard to blood, how does the knowledge of God compare with worldly wisdom?
7. How does accurate Scriptural knowledge compare with worldly wisdom as respects child rearing?
8, 9. How would you explain what Proverbs 2: 1-6 says about the knowledge that mankind really needs?

supply the knowledge that mankind really needs. Concerning it, Proverbs 2:1-6 says: "My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, so as to pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment; if, moreover, you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, if you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God. For Jehovah himself gives wisdom; out of his mouth there are knowledge and discernment."

[9] Those motivated by good hearts pay attention to wisdom by putting God-given knowledge to proper use. They incline their hearts to discernment, carefully weighing the facts they are learning. In effect, they call out for understanding, or the ability to see how the aspects of a subject relate to one another. Righthearted ones work as though they are digging for silver and searching for hidden treasures. But what great treasure is found by those with receptive hearts? It is "the very knowledge of God." What is that? Put simply, it is the knowledge found in God's Word, the Bible.

[10] The knowledge of God is sound, stable, life-giving. It promotes spiritual health. Paul urged Timothy: "Keep holding *the pattern of healthful words* that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in connection with Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 1:13) A language has a pattern of words. Similarly, the "pure language" of Scriptural truth has "the pattern of healthful words," based mainly on the Bible's theme of the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty by means of the Kingdom. (Zephaniah 3:9) We need to keep this pattern of healthful words in mind and heart. If we are to avoid figurative heart trouble and remain spiritually healthy, we must apply the Bible in life and put to full use the spiritual provisions God is making through "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47; Titus 2:2) Let us always remember that for good spiritual health, we need the knowledge of God.

[11] Consider other reasons why earth's billions need the knowledge of God. Do all of them know how the earth and humans came into existence? No, they do not. Does all mankind know the true God and his Son? Is everyone aware of the issues that Satan has raised regarding divine sovereignty and human integrity? No again. Do people in general know why we grow old and die? Once more we must say no. Do all of earth's inhabitants realize that God's Kingdom is now ruling and that we are living in the last days? Are they aware of wicked spirit forces? Do all humans have reliable knowledge about how to have a happy family life? And do the masses know that joyous life in Paradise is our Creator's purpose for obedient mankind? To these questions too the answer is no. Clearly, then, mankind needs the knowledge of God.

[12] Mankind also needs the knowledge of God because of what Jesus said in prayer on the last night of his earthly life. His apostles must have been deeply moved to hear him say: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Applying such knowledge is the only way to worship God acceptably. "God is a Spirit, and those

10. What must we do in order to enjoy good spiritual health?

11. What are some reasons why mankind needs the knowledge of God?

12. How can we worship God "with spirit and truth"?

worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth," said Jesus. (John 4:24) We worship God "with spirit" when we are moved by hearts filled with faith and love. How do we worship him 'with truth'? By studying his Word and worshiping him according to his revealed truth—"the very knowledge of God."

13 Thousands begin to worship Jehovah each year. Yet, must Bible studies be conducted with interested people for a long time, or is it possible for honesthearted ones to come to the point of baptism more quickly? Well, consider what happened in the case of the jailer and his household mentioned at Acts 16:25-34. Paul and Silas had been imprisoned at Philippi, but in the middle of the night, a great earthquake opened the prison doors. Thinking that all the prisoners had escaped and that he would be severely punished, the jailer was about to commit suicide when Paul told him that they were all there. Paul and Silas "spoke the word of Jehovah to him together with all those in his house." That jailer and his family were Gentiles who had no background in the Holy Scriptures. Yet, in that one night, they became believers. More than that, "one and all, he and his were baptized." Those were unusual circumstances, but new ones were taught basic truths and then learned other things at congregation meetings. Something similar should be possible today.

The Harvest Is Great!

14 It would be fine if Jehovah's Witnesses could conduct a greater number of effective Bible studies in a shorter period of time. There is a real need for this. In lands of Eastern Europe, for instance, people have to get on a waiting list for Bible studies. That is also the case elsewhere. In one town in the Dominican Republic, five Witnesses had so many requests that they could not conduct all the studies. What did they do? They encouraged interested ones to attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall and get on a waiting list for Bible studies. The same situation exists in many places around the earth.

15 Vast territories—great fields for harvesting—are opening up to God's people. Though Jehovah, "the Master of the Harvest," is sending out more workers, there is still much to do. (Matthew 9:37, 38) To spread the knowledge of God more quickly, therefore, the 'faithful slave' has provided something that concisely furnishes specific information so that Bible students can make spiritual progress with each lesson. It is a new publication that can be covered on home Bible studies rather quickly—perhaps in a few months. And it can easily be carried in our briefcases, our purses, or even our pockets! The hundreds of thousands assembled at the "Joyful Praisers" District Conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses were delighted to receive this new 192-page book entitled *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life.*

16 Writers in various lands prepared material that was carefully put in final form for the *Knowledge* book. It should therefore have international appeal. But will it be long before this new publication is released in the languages of people around the world? No, because a 192-page book can be translated more quickly than larger books. By October 1995, the Writing Committee of the Governing Body had approved the translation of this book from English into over 130 languages.

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13. What incident is recorded at Acts 16:25-34, and what can we learn therefrom?

14. Why is there a need to conduct a greater number of effective Bible studies in a shorter period of time?

15, 16. What has been provided to spread the knowledge of God more quickly, and what are some facts about it?

[17] Specifics in each chapter of the *Knowledge* book should enable students to make fairly rapid spiritual progress. The book presents Scriptural truths in an upbuilding way. It does not dwell on false doctrines. Clarity of language and logical development should make it easy to use the book to conduct Bible studies and help people to get a grasp of the knowledge of God. Besides quoted scriptures, there are cited Bible texts that the student can look up in preparation for the discussion. These may be read during the study as time permits, although it would be unwise to bring in additional material that could becloud the main points. Rather, those conducting Bible studies should try to discern and convey to the student what the book is proving in each chapter. This means that the teacher must study diligently, so that the main thoughts are very clear in his mind.

[18] How can the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* speed up the disciple-making work? This 192-page book can be studied in a comparatively short time, and those "rightly disposed for everlasting life" should be able to learn enough through a study of it to make a dedication to Jehovah and get baptized. (Acts 13:48) So let us put the *Knowledge* book to good use in the ministry. If a Bible student is well along in studying another book, it may be practical to complete it. Otherwise, it is suggested that Bible studies be switched to the *Knowledge* book. After completing this new publication, it is not suggested that a study be conducted with the same student in a second book. Those who embrace the truth can round out their knowledge by attending meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses as well as by reading the Bible and various Christian publications on their own.—2 John 1.

17. What factors should make it easy to use the *Knowledge* book?
18. What suggestions are made regarding the use of the *Knowledge* book?

How Would You Reply?

- ☐ How would you describe the figurative heart?
- ☐ What is the knowledge of God?
- ☐ Why is the knowledge of God needed by mankind?
- ☐ What new book is available, and how do you plan to use it?

[19] The *Knowledge* book was written with the objective of helping a person to answer all the questions that the elders review with unbaptized publishers desiring to get baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses. Hence, before you switch your present Bible studies to this new publication, it is recommended that you spend a few hours reviewing the questions on pages 175 to 218 of the book *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry.** This will help you to stress the answers to such questions during Bible studies in the *Knowledge* book.

[20] People everywhere should hear the good news. Yes, mankind needs the knowledge of God, and Jehovah has his Witnesses to make it known. Now we have a new book provided by our loving heavenly Father through the faithful and discreet slave. Will you use it to teach the truth and bring honor to Jehovah's holy name? Jehovah will surely bless you as you put forth every effort to make available to many the knowledge that leads to everlasting life.

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

19. Before conducting Bible studies in the *Knowledge* book, why would it be helpful to review pages 175 to 218 in *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry?*
20. What do you plan to do with the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life?*

JEHOVAH'S SHEEP NEED TENDER CARE

"Know that Jehovah is God. . . .
We are his people and the sheep of his pasturage."—PSALM 100:3.

JEHOVAH is the Great Shepherd. If we are his servants, he views us as his sheep and gives us tender care. Our heavenly Father comforts and refreshes us and leads us in "the tracks of righteousness for his name's sake." (Psalm 23:1-4) The Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, loves us so much that he surrendered his soul for us.—John 10:7-15.

[2] As recipients of tender care, we can say with the psalmist: "Serve Jehovah with rejoicing. Come in before him with a joyful cry. Know that Jehovah is God. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasturage." (Psalm 100:2, 3) Yes, we are joyful and secure. It is as though we were safe from evil predators in a sheepfold having strong stone walls.—Numbers 32:16; 1 Samuel 24:3; Zephaniah 2:6.

Willing Shepherds of the Flock

[3] No wonder we are joyful as God's sheep! Appointed elders take the lead among us. They do not "play the prince," lord it over us, or try to be masters over our faith. (Numbers 16:13; Matthew 20:25-28; 2 Corinthians 1:24; Hebrews 13:7) Instead, they are loving shepherds who apply the apostle Peter's counsel: "Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; neither as lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:2, 3) The apostle Paul told fellow elders: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son." And how grateful the sheep are that these men appointed by holy spirit "treat the flock with tenderness"! —Acts 20:28-30.

[4] Jesus gave the congregation "gifts in men," some as "pastors," or shepherds, who treat Jehovah's flock in a tender way. (Ephesians 4:8, 11; *King James Version*) One of these men was Charles T. Russell, the Watch Tower Society's first president. He was called Pastor Russell because of his loving and compassionate activities in shepherding the flock under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Today, Christian elders are appointed by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, and care is exercised not to use such terms as "pastor," "elder," or "teacher" as titles. (Matthew 23:8-12) Yet, present-day elders do a pastoral, or shepherding, work for the benefit of the sheep of Jehovah's pasturage.

[5] As shepherds, elders play a significant

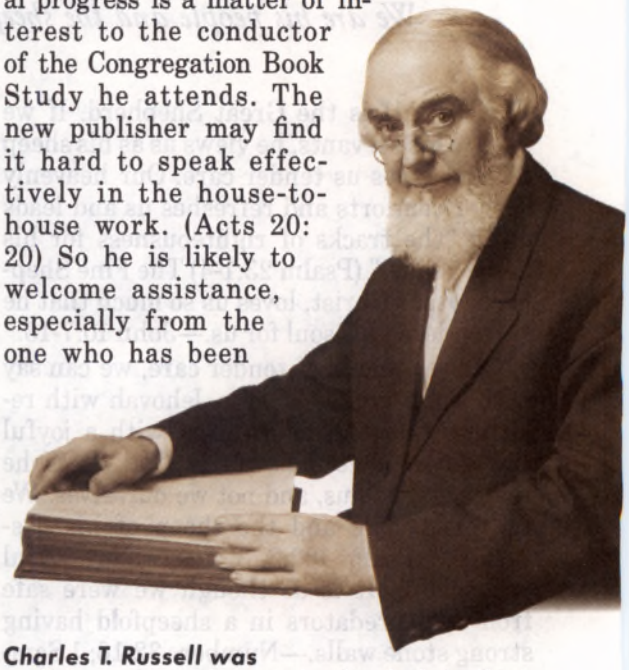
1. How does Jehovah treat his servants?
2. In what condition do God's people find themselves?
3. How do appointed Christian elders treat God's flock?
4. For what kind of relationship with the flock was Charles T. Russell well-known?
5. Why should new ones get to know the appointed elders in the Christian congregation?

part in the spiritual progress of new ones. Hence, the new book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* says on page 168: "Get to know the appointed elders in the congregation. They have much experience in applying the knowledge of God, for they have met the qualifications for overseers set forth in the Bible. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) Do not hesitate to approach one of them if you need spiritual help to overcome a habit or a trait that conflicts with God's requirements. You will find that the elders follow Paul's admonition: 'Speak consolingly to the depressed souls, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all.'—1 Thessalonians 2: 7, 8; 5:14."

When New Ones Want to Preach

6 After a Bible student has taken in knowledge and has attended meetings for a while, he may want to become a Kingdom publisher, a preacher of the good news. (Mark 13:10) If so, the Witness conducting the Bible study with him should contact the presiding overseer, who will arrange for one of the elders on the Congregation Service Committee and another elder to meet with the Bible student and his teacher. The discussion will be based on the book *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry,* pages 98 and 99. If these two elders see that the new one believes basic Bible teachings and has conformed to God's principles, he will be told that he is qualified to share in the public ministry.* When he reports his ministry by turning in a field service report, it will be posted on a Congregation's Publisher Record card made out in his name. The new one can now report his witnessing activity along with the millions of others who joyfully 'publish the word of God.' (Acts 13:5) An announcement that he is an unbaptized publisher will be made to the congregation.

7 An unbaptized publisher needs the help of the elders and other mature Christians. For example, his spiritual progress is a matter of interest to the conductor of the Congregation Book Study he attends. The new publisher may find it hard to speak effectively in the house-to-house work. (Acts 20: 20) So he is likely to welcome assistance, especially from the one who has been conducting Bible studies with him in the *Knowledge* book. Such practical help is appropriate, for Jesus Christ prepared his disciples for the ministry.—Mark 6:7-13; Luke 10:1-22.



Charles T. Russell was well-known as a loving shepherd of the flock

8 If our ministry is to be effective, good advance preparation is essential. Therefore, the two publishers might first get together to practice presentations suggested in the monthly issues of *Our Kingdom Ministry*. When they begin their field service, the more experienced one might take the first

* At this point, the new one may obtain a copy of the book *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry.*

6. What procedure is followed if a Bible student wants to become a Kingdom publisher?

7, 8. In what ways may an unbaptized publisher be given needed help in the ministry?

door or two. After a friendly introduction, both publishers could share in giving a witness. Working together in the ministry for a few weeks may lead to fine return visits and even a home Bible study in the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. The more experienced publisher might conduct the study for a while and then turn it over to the new Kingdom proclaimer. How happy both publishers will be if the Bible student manifests appreciation for the knowledge of God!

9 As an unbaptized publisher progresses spiritually, he may make a dedication to God in prayer and want to be baptized. (Compare Mark 1:9-11.) He should make his desire for baptism known to the congregation's presiding overseer, who will arrange for elders to review with the publisher the questions on pages 175 to 218 of *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*. The four parts into which the questions are divided may be covered in three sessions by three different elders if possible. If they agree that the unbaptized publisher has a reasonable understanding of Bible teachings and qualifies in other ways, they will tell him that he may be baptized. As a result of his dedication and baptism, he becomes 'marked' for salvation.—Ezekiel 9:4-6.

Meeting Special Needs

10 After an individual has completed his Bible study in the *Knowledge* book and has been baptized, it may not be necessary to conduct a formal study with him in a second book, such as *United in Worship of the Only True God.** Of course, the recently baptized person will learn much as he prepares for Christian meetings and attends them regularly. He will also acquire additional knowledge as his thirst for truth moves him to read and study Christian publications privately and to discuss Scriptural matters with fellow believers. But what if special needs arise?

11 Even Apollos, who "was well versed in the Scriptures" and taught about Jesus with correctness, benefited when the experienced Christians Priscilla and Aquila "took him into their company and expounded the way of God more correctly to him." (Acts 18:24-26; compare Acts 19:1-7.) Therefore, suppose a recently baptized young adult is considering courtship and marriage. A more experienced Christian might help him to find information on these subjects in Watch Tower publications. For instance, helpful material along these lines appears in the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work,* Section 7.* The publisher who conducted the Bible study with him might discuss this material with the new one, although a regular study would not be involved.

12 Consider another example. Perhaps newly baptized marriage mates are having problems applying godly principles. They might consult an elder, who could spend a few evenings discussing the Scriptures with them and direct their attention to information found in Watch Tower publications. However, the elder would not reestablish a regular Bible study with the couple.

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

9. What arrangements are made when a publisher desires to be baptized?
10. After completing his study of the *Knowledge* book and being baptized, how will a person increase his Scriptural knowledge?

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

11. (a) How was Apollos helped by Priscilla and Aquila? (b) What help might be given to a recently baptized young adult who is considering marriage?
12. What assistance might be provided for newly baptized marriage mates having problems?

Compassionate shepherds treat God's flock with tenderness

If a New One Errs

13 Elders imitate the Great Shepherd, Jehovah, who says: "I myself shall feed my sheep, . . . the broken one I shall bandage and the ailing one I shall strengthen." (Ezekiel 34:15, 16; Ephesians 5:1) In line with that spirit, the disciple Jude urged that mercy be shown to anointed Christians who had doubts or had fallen into sin. (Jude 22, 23) Since we rightly expect much more of experienced Christians, surely mercy should be shown to a newly baptized person—a mere lamb—who errs but is repentant. (Luke 12:48; 15:1-7) Elders, who 'judge for Jehovah,' therefore give such sheep tender care and readjust them in a spirit of mildness.—2 Chronicles 19:6; Acts 20:28, 29; Galatians 6:1.*

14 Suppose, then, that a recently baptized publisher formerly had a drinking problem and lapsed into overindulgence on one or two occasions. Or perhaps he overcame a long-standing tobacco habit but yielded to the temptation to smoke privately a time or two. Even though our new brother has prayed for God's forgiveness, he should seek the help of an elder so that the sin does not become habitual. (Psalm 32:1-5; James 5:14, 15) When he mentions his error to one of the elders, that elder should try to readjust the new one in a merciful way. (Psalm 130:3) Scriptural counsel may suffice to help him to make straight paths for his feet thereafter. (Hebrews 12:12, 13) This elder would discuss the circumstances with the presiding overseer of the congregation to determine what further assistance should be given.

15 In some cases more may be needed. If notoriety, danger to the flock, or other serious problems are involved, the body of elders would assign two elders to investigate the matter. If these elders find that the matter is sufficiently serious that a judicial committee is needed, they should report this to the body of elders. The body of elders would then appoint a judicial committee to assist the erring one. The judicial committee should deal with him in a tender way. They should strive to readjust him with the Scriptures. If he responds to

* Such an arrangement for unbaptized publishers was outlined in the article "Helping Others to Worship God," appearing in *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1988, pages 15-20.

13. Why should congregation elders show mercy to a newly baptized person who errs but is repentant?

14. What should be done when a recently baptized publisher commits a serious sin, and how can he be helped?

15. In some cases, what may be necessary when a recently baptized person sins?

the kindly efforts of the judicial committee, then they could determine whether there would be any benefit in his not being used for parts on the platform at meetings in the Kingdom Hall or if he should be allowed to comment at meetings.

16 If the erring one responds, an elder or two on the judicial committee could arrange to make shepherding calls intended to bolster his faith and build his appreciation for God's righteous standards. Each of them might work with him in the field ministry from time to time. They may have a few Scriptural discussions with him, possibly using appropriate *Watchtower* and *Awake!* articles but not establishing a regular Bible study. With such tender care, the erring one may be strengthened to resist weaknesses of the flesh in the days ahead.

17 Of course, having been baptized recently is no excuse for unrepentantly practicing sin. (Hebrews 10:26, 27; Jude 4) If any baptized wrongdoer does not repent and abandon his sinful course, he would be expelled from the congregation. (1 Corinthians 5:6, 11-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12; 2 John 9-11) When this action seems necessary, the body of elders will choose a judicial committee. If expulsion occurs, this brief announcement would be made: " . . . has been disfellowshipped."*

16. What can elders do to help an erring one?
17. What steps are taken if a baptized wrongdoer does not repent and abandon his sinful course?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ How does Jehovah treat his sheep?
- ☐ What is done when new ones want to preach?
- ☐ How can fellow believers help new ones having special needs?
- ☐ What help can elders give to those who err but are repentant?
- ☐ How might you help a newly baptized person to "press on to maturity"?

Help Them to "Press On to Maturity"

18 The vast majority of God's servants will remain in the flock. Happily, too, every one of us will be able to draw ever closer to our heavenly Father because we will always be able to learn more about him and his will. (Ecclesiastes 3:11; James 4:8) The thousands baptized at Pentecost in 33 C.E. certainly had more to learn. (Acts 2:5, 37-41; 4:4) So did Gentiles, who lacked a Scriptural background. For instance, this was true of those baptized after Paul's speech on the Areopagus in Athens. (Acts 17:33, 34) Today, too, newly baptized ones have more to learn and need time and help to strengthen their resolve to keep doing what is right in God's sight.—Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13.

19 Each year thousands get baptized and need assistance so that they can "press on to maturity." (Hebrews 6:1-3) By word, example, and practical help in the ministry, you may be able to assist some to put on the new personality and "go on walking in the truth." (3 John 4; Colossians 3: 9, 10) If you are an experienced publisher,

* If the decision is to disfellowship and there is an appeal, announcement is held in abeyance. See pages 147-8 of the book *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry.*

18. Why can we be sure that newly baptized Christians and others will always have more to learn about Jehovah and his will?
19. How can those getting baptized be helped to "press on to maturity"?

the elders may invite you to help a new fellow believer in field service or to discuss certain Scriptural points with him for a few weeks in order to strengthen his faith in God, his appreciation for Christian meetings, and so forth. The relationship of shepherds to the flock is like that of a father in exhortation and a mother in gentleness. (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8, 11) Yet, a few elders and ministerial servants cannot care for everything needed in a congregation. All of us are like a family whose members help one another. Each of us can do something to assist our fellow worshipers. You yourself may be able to offer encouragement, console the depressed, support the weak.—1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15.

[20] Mankind needs the knowledge of God, and as a Witness of Jehovah, you can have a joyful share in spreading it. Jehovah's sheep need tender care, and you can play a loving role in helping to provide this. May Jehovah bless your ministry, and may he reward you for your heartfelt efforts to help the sheep of his pasturage.

20. What can you do to spread the knowledge of God and to provide tender care for the sheep of Jehovah's pasturage?

Comfort for Those in Need

MANY have commented on how certain *Watchtower* or *Awake!* articles have deepened their personal relationship with Jehovah. Said one: "After reading this article, I felt that Jehovah with all his mightiness and grandeur was right there with me. I felt that he is a real person." Another letter stated: "Our hearts and minds have been changed so dramatically in our view of Jehovah that we are not the same persons. It is as if someone wiped our eyeglasses clean, and now we can see everything very clearly."

Some write to say how the magazines help them address specific problems or challenges, thereby assuring them of Jehovah's personal interest in them. One reader put it this way: "Thank you so much for once again letting us see how much Jehovah cares for and loves his people." A woman in Japan who lost a child in death said this about *Awake!* articles on that subject: "The depth of God's mercy poured from the pages, and I cried and cried and cried. I have put these articles in a place where I can immediately read them whenever I feel miserable and lonely." Another mourning woman wrote: "The *Watchtower* and *Awake!* articles and the brochure *"When Someone You Love Dies"* have given me the strength I needed to endure my times of sorrow."

The Holy Scriptures are the primary source of comfort. (Romans 15:4) *The Watchtower* adheres to the Bible as its authority, and so does its companion magazine, *Awake!* Because of this, these journals have proved to be of comfort and encouragement to their readers.

COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT
Gems of Many Facets

MOST of us have gone through times when we felt extremely poor—not necessarily low on funds but low in spirits. We were despondent, even deeply depressed. Yet, at such times we may well have had within our reach something precious that could do us a world of good. That "gem" is encouragement.

In the Bible the same Greek word is used for "encourage" and "comfort." Both words convey the sense of imparting courage, strength, or hope. Clearly, then, when we are feeling weak or low, comfort and encouragement are exactly what we need. Where can they be found?

The Bible assures us that Jehovah is "the God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3) It also tells us that "he is not far off from each one of us." (Acts 17:27) So comfort and encouragement are available. Let us consider four general areas through which Jehovah provides encouragement.

Through a Personal Relationship With God

The greatest source of comfort is a personal relationship with Jehovah God. That such a relationship is even possible is encouraging. After all, what world ruler would accept our telephone calls or would express a personal interest in our problems? Jehovah is infinitely mightier than such men are. Yet, he is humble—more than willing to deal with lowly, imperfect humans. (Psalm 18:35) Jehovah has even taken the initiative in showing love to us. First John 4:10 says: "The love is in this respect, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins." Further, Jehovah lovingly draws us to his Son.—John 6:44.

Have you responded and sought comfort in a friendship with God? (Compare James 2:23.) For instance, if you have a dear, close friend, is it not a pleasure to spend some time alone with that one, talking freely about your anxieties and concerns, your hopes and joys? Jehovah invites you to do the same with him. He puts no limit on how long you may talk with him in prayer—and he really listens. (Psalm 65:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17) Jesus prayed regularly and fervently. In fact, before choosing his 12 apostles, he spent a whole night in prayer.—Luke 6:12-16; Hebrews 5:7.

From time to time, each one of us can manage to be alone with Jehovah. Just sitting quietly at a window or taking a peaceful walk can provide a good opportunity to open up our heart in prayer to Jehovah. Doing so can be a source of tremendous relief and comfort. If we have some aspect of Jehovah's creation to look at while meditating—if only a patch of sky, some trees or birds—we may find therein some comforting reminders of Jehovah's love and concern for us.—Romans 1:20.

Through a Personal Study of God's Word

It is through a personal study of the Bible, though, that Jehovah's qualities really unfold for us. The Bible repeatedly reveals Jehovah to be "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness." (Exodus 34:6; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15) The desire to comfort his earthly servants is an intrinsic part of Jehovah's personality.

Consider, for instance, Jehovah's words at Isaiah 66:13: "Like a man whom his own mother keeps comforting, so I myself shall keep comforting you people." Jehovah designed the mother's love of her children to be self-sacrificing and loyal. If you have ever seen a loving mother comfort her injured child, you know what Jehovah means when he says that he will comfort his people.

Many Bible accounts show such comfort in action. When the prophet Elijah was threatened with death by wicked Queen Jezebel, he lost his courage and ran for his life. He was so despondent that he walked into the wilderness for a full day's journey, evidently taking no water or supplies with him. In anguish Elijah told Jehovah that he wanted to die. (1 Kings 19:1-4) What did Jehovah do to comfort and encourage his prophet?

Jehovah did not rebuke Elijah for feeling alone, worthless, and afraid. On the contrary, the prophet heard "a calm, low voice." (1 Kings 19:12) If you read 1 Kings chapter 19, you will notice how Jehovah comforted Elijah, soothed him, and built his faith. This comfort was not superficial. It went right to Elijah's troubled heart, encouraging the prophet to carry on. (Compare Isaiah 40:1, 2.) Soon, he was back on the job.

Jesus Christ likewise comforts and encourages his loyal followers. In fact, Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah: "The Sovereign Lord Jehovah . . . has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, . . . to comfort all the mourning ones." (Isaiah 61:1-3) During his lifetime, Jesus left no doubt that these words applied to him. (Luke 4:17-21) If you feel in need of comfort, meditate on Jesus' gentle, loving dealings with people who were hurt and in need. Indeed, careful study of the Bible is a great source of comfort and encouragement.

Through the Congregation

In the Christian congregation, the gems of comfort and encouragement sparkle in their many facets. The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Keep comforting one another and building one another up." (1 Thessalonians 5:11) How may comfort and encouragement be found at congregation meetings?

Primarily, of course, we attend Christian meetings in order to be "taught by Jehovah," to receive instruction about him and his ways. (John 6:45) Such instruction is meant to be encouraging and comforting. At Acts 15:32, we read: "Judas and Silas . . . encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them."

Have you ever had the experience of going to a Christian meeting when you were despondent and coming home feeling much better? Perhaps something said in a talk, in a comment, or in a prayer touched your heart and provided needed comfort and encouragement. So do not stay away from Christian meetings.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Associating with our brothers and sisters in the ministry and on other occasions can have a similar effect. In Hebrew several verbs meaning "to bind together" came to refer also to "strength" or "strengthen" —the apparent idea being that things become stronger when bound together. This principle holds true in the congregation. We are comforted, encouraged, yes, strengthened, by associating together. And we are bound together by love, the strongest of bonds.—Colossians 3:14.

At times it is the faithfulness of our spiritual brothers or sisters that encourages us. (1 Thessalonians 3:7, 8) Sometimes it is the love they show. (Philemon 7) And sometimes it is just working together, shoulder to shoulder, while talking to others about God's Kingdom. If you feel weak and in need of encouragement when it comes to the ministry, why not make arrangements to work with an older or more experienced Kingdom publisher? You will likely find much com-

fort in doing so.—Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Philippians 1:27.

Through "the Faithful and Discreet Slave"

Who organizes the comforting features of our worship? Jesus appointed a class whom he designated as "the faithful and discreet slave" to dispense spiritual "food at the proper time." (Matthew 24:45) In the first century C.E., this body of spirit-anointed Christians was already at work. The governing body of elders in Jerusalem sent out letters of instruction and guidance to the congregations. With what result? The Bible records how the congregations reacted to one such letter: "After reading it, they rejoiced over the encouragement."—Acts 15:23-31.

The God of all comfort is also the Hearer of prayer

Likewise, in these critical last days, the faithful and discreet slave is dispensing spiritual food that provides great comfort and encouragement for Jehovah's people. Do you partake of that food? It is readily available in the printed literature the slave class makes available all over the world. The *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines as well as the books, brochures, and tracts that the Watch Tower Society publishes have brought comfort to countless readers.

One traveling overseer wrote: "Most of our brothers and sisters want to do what is right, but they often struggle with frustrations, fears, and the feeling that they are powerless to help themselves. Articles in our journals are helping many to regain control of their lives and emotions. The articles also give elders something more to offer than superficial encouragement."

Make full use of the literature from the faithful slave class. The timely magazines, books, and other publications can help us find comfort when times are hard. On the other hand, if you are in a position to offer encouragement to one who is depressed, use the Scriptural information in these journals. The articles are written very carefully, often after many weeks or months of painstaking research, study, and prayer. The counsel is Bible-based, tried and true. Some have found it very helpful to read an appropriate article or two with one who is feeling low. This can result in much comfort and encouragement.

If you found precious gems, would you hoard them, or would you generously share some of the wealth with others? Make it a goal to be a source of comfort and encouragement to your brothers and sisters in the congregation. If you build up rather than tear down, commend rather than criticize, speak with "the tongue of the taught ones" rather than with the 'thoughtless stabs of a sword,' you may make a difference in the lives of others. (Isaiah 50:4; Proverbs 12:18) Indeed, you are likely to be viewed as a gem yourself—a source of genuine comfort and encouragement!

MOSES AND AARON

Courageous Proclaimers of God's Word

IMAGINE the scene: Eighty-year-old Moses and his brother, Aaron, are standing before the most powerful man on earth —Pharaoh of Egypt. To the Egyptians this man is more than a representative of the gods. They believe that he himself is a god. He is viewed as the very incarnation of Horus, a falcon-headed deity. Together with Isis and Osiris, Horus formed the principal trinity among Egypt's gods and goddesses.

Anyone approaching Pharaoh could not help but notice the ominous figure of a cobra's head projecting from the center of his crown. Supposedly, this serpent could spit out fire and destruction upon any of Pharaoh's enemies. Now Moses and Aaron have come before this god-king with an unprecedented request—that he send the enslaved Israelites away so that they can hold a festival to their God, Jehovah. —Exodus 5:1.

Jehovah had already foretold that Pharaoh's heart would be obstinate. Therefore, Moses and Aaron were not surprised at his defiant reply: "Who is Jehovah, so that I should obey his voice to send Israel away? I do not know Jehovah at all and, what is more, I am not going to send Israel away." (Exodus 4:21; 5:2) Thus, the stage was set for a dramatic confrontation. During the next encounter, Moses and Aaron presented stunning evidence to Pharaoh that they represented the true and almighty God.

A Miracle Occurs

As instructed by Jehovah, Aaron performed a miracle that proved Jehovah's supremacy over the gods of Egypt. He threw down his rod in front of Pharaoh, and immediately it became a big snake! Perplexed by this miracle, Pharaoh summoned his magic-practicing priests.* With the help of demon powers, these men were able to do something similar with their own rods.

If Pharaoh and his priests gloated, it was only for a moment. Picture their faces when Aaron's snake swallowed up their snakes, one by one! All present could see that the Egyptian deities were no match for the true God, Jehovah.—Exodus 7:8-13.

Even after this, however, Pharaoh's heart remained obstinate. Only after God brought ten devastating blows, or plagues, upon Egypt did Pharaoh finally tell Moses and Aaron: "Get up, get out from the midst of my people, both you and the other sons of Israel, and go, serve Jehovah, just as you have stated."—Exodus 12:31.

Lessons for Us

What enabled Moses and Aaron to approach the powerful Pharaoh of Egypt? At first, Moses expressed a lack of confidence in his ability, claiming to be "slow of mouth and slow of tongue." Even after being assured of Jehovah's support, he begged: "Send, please, by the hand of the one whom you are going to send." In other words, Moses pleaded that God send someone else. (Exodus 4:10, 13) Nevertheless, Jehovah used meek Moses, giv-

* The Hebrew word rendered "magic-practicing priests" refers to a group of sorcerers who claimed to possess supernatural powers beyond those of the demons. It was believed that these men could invoke the demons to obey and that the demons had no power over these sorcerers.

Moses and Aaron courageously represented Jehovah before Pharaoh

ing him the wisdom and the strength needed to carry out his assignment.—Numbers 12:3.

Today, servants of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ are carrying out the command to "make disciples of people of all the nations." (Matthew 28:19, 20) To do our part in the fulfilling of this commission, we should make the best use of Scriptural knowledge and of any abilities we may possess. (1 Timothy 4:13-16) Instead of focusing on our inadequacies, let us accept with faith any assignment that God has given us. He can qualify and strengthen us to do his will.—2 Corinthians 3:5, 6; Philippians 4:13.

Since Moses was up against human and demonic opposition, he certainly needed superhuman help. Consequently, Jehovah assured him: "See, I have made you God to Pharaoh." (Exodus 7:1) Yes, Moses had divine backing and authority. With Jehovah's spirit upon him, Moses had no reason to fear Pharaoh or that proud ruler's cohorts.

We too must rely on Jehovah's holy spirit, or active force, to accomplish our ministry. (John 14:26; 15:26, 27) With divine backing we can echo the words of David, who sang: "In God I have put my trust. I shall not be afraid. What can earthling man do to me?"—Psalm 56:11.

In his compassion Jehovah did not leave Moses alone in his assignment. Rather, God said: "Aaron your own brother will become your prophet. You—you will speak all that I shall command you; and Aaron your brother will do the speaking to Pharaoh." (Exodus 7:1, 2) How loving of Jehovah to work within the limits of what Moses could reasonably handle!

God provides us with an association of fellow Christians who accept the challenge of being Witnesses of Jehovah, the Most High. (1 Peter 5:9) Despite the obstacles we may encounter, therefore, let us be like Moses and Aaron—courageous proclaimers of God's word.

LIGHT ENDS AN AGE OF DARKNESS

THE world of Jesus Christ and his apostles was very different from that of Hebrew Scripture times. Bible readers unaware of this may imagine social and religious continuity from the prophet Malachi to the Gospel writer Matthew, only vaguely sensing what occurred during the 400 years between them.

Malachi, the last book of the Hebrew Scriptures in most present-day Bibles, closes with the remnant of Israel resettled in their homeland after being released from captivity in Babylon. (Jeremiah 23:3) Devoted Jews were encouraged to wait for God's day of judgment to rid the world of evil and introduce the Messianic Age. (Malachi 4:1, 2) Meanwhile, Persia ruled. Persian troops quartered in Judah kept the peace and upheld royal edicts by force of arms.—Compare Ezra 4:23.

Jesus showed that Jewish religious leaders were in spiritual darkness

However, Bible lands did not remain stable throughout the following four centuries. Spiritual darkness and confusion began to intrude. The Near East was convulsed with violence, terrorism, oppression, radical religious thinking, speculative philosophy, and culture shock.

Matthew, the first book of the Christian Greek Scriptures, was written in a different era. Rome's legions enforced the *Pax Romana,* or Roman Peace. Reverent people keenly awaited the Messiah's coming to abolish suffering, tyranny, and poverty, and to shed light on life, prosperity, and tranquillity. (Compare Luke 1:67-79; 24:21; 2 Timothy 1:10.) Let us take a closer look at the dynamic forces that reshaped Jewish society in the centuries preceding the birth of Jesus Christ.

Jewish Life in Persian Times

Following Cyrus' proclamation that released the Jews from Babylonian captivity, in 537 B.C.E. a band of Jews and non-Jewish associates departed from Babylonia. This spiritually responsive remnant returned to a territory of destroyed cities and desolated land. Edomites, Phoenicians, Samaritans, Arabian tribes, and others had eaten up Israel's once spacious territory. What remained of Judah and Benjamin became the province of Judah in the Persian satrapy called Abar Nahara (Beyond the River).—Ezra 1:1-4; 2:64, 65.

Under Persian rule, Judah began to experience "a period of expansion and population growth," says *The Cambridge Histo-*

ry of Judaism. It further says concerning Jerusalem: "Peasants and pilgrims brought gifts, Temple and city became rich, and their wealth attracted foreign merchants and craftsmen." Although the Persians were very tolerant of local government and religion, taxation was severe and could be paid only in precious metals.—Compare Nehemiah 5:1-5, 15; 9:36, 37; 13:15, 16, 20.

The final years of the Persian Empire were very turbulent times, marked by revolts of the satraps. Many Jews got involved in an uprising along the Mediterranean Coast and were deported far to the north, to Hyrcania on the Caspian Sea. However, most of Judah does not appear to have been affected by Persia's punitive response.

The Grecian Period

Alexander the Great sprang leopardlike upon the Middle East in 332 B.C.E., but a taste for Greek imports had already preceded him. (Daniel 7:6) Realizing that Greek culture had political value, he deliberately set out to Hellenize his expanding empire. Greek became an international language. Alexander's brief reign fostered a love for sophistries, an enthusiasm for sports, and an appreciation for aesthetics. Gradually, even the Jewish heritage gave way to Hellenism.

Following Alexander's death in 323 B.C.E., his successors in Syria and Egypt were the first to fill the roles that the prophet Daniel called "the king of the north" and "the king of the south." (Daniel 11:1-19) During the reign of the Egyptian "king of the south," Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.E.), the Hebrew Scriptures began to be translated into Koine, common Greek. This version came to be called the *Septuagint*. Many verses of this work were quoted in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The Greek language proved to be excellent for conveying enlightening shades of meaning to a spiritually confused and bedarkened world.

After Antiochus IV Epiphanes became king of Syria and ruler of Palestine (175-164 B.C.E.), Judaism was nearly wiped out by government-sponsored persecution. Jews were forced, under threat of death, to renounce Jehovah God and to sacrifice only to Greek deities. In December 168 B.C.E., a pagan altar was built over the great altar of Jehovah at Jerusalem's temple, and sacrifices were offered on it to the Olympian Zeus. Shocked but courageous men of the countryside banded together under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus and waged bitter warfare until they gained possession of Jerusalem. The temple was rededicated to God, and three years to the day after its desecration, the daily sacrifices were renewed.

In the course of the remaining Greek period, those of the Judean community aggressively sought to enlarge their territory to its ancient boundaries. Their newfound military prowess was used in an ungodly way to force their pagan neighbors to convert at sword point. Still, Greek political theory continued to govern cities and towns.

During this time, contenders for the high priesthood were often corrupt. Schemes, assassinations, and political intrigues tainted their office. The more ungodly the spirit among the Jews, the more popular Greek sports became. How astonishing it was to see young priests neglecting their duties in order to participate in the games! Jewish athletes even submitted to painful surgery to become "uncircumcised" so as to avoid embarrassment when they competed naked with Gentiles.—Compare 1 Corinthians 7:18.

Religious Changes

In the early postexilic years, faithful Jews resisted the blending of pagan concepts and philosophies with the true

religion revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. The book of Esther, written after more than 60 years of close association with Persia, contains not one trace of Zoroastrianism. Furthermore, no influence of this Persian religion is found in the Bible books of Ezra, Nehemiah, or Malachi, all written during the early part of the Persian period (537-443 B.C.E.).

However, scholars believe that during the latter part of the Persian period, many Jews began to adopt some of the views of the worshipers of Ahura Mazda, the chief Persian deity. This shows up in popular superstitions and the beliefs of the Essenes. Common Hebrew words for jackals, other desert creatures, and nocturnal birds became associated in Jewish minds with the evil spirits and night monsters of Babylonian and Persian folklore.

Coin bearing the likeness of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

Jews began to look at pagan ideas in a different light. Concepts of heaven, hell, the soul, the Word (Logos), and wisdom all took on new meanings. And if, as was then taught, God was so remote that he no longer communicated with men, he needed intermediaries. The Greeks called these mediating and guardian spirits daimones. Having adopted the idea that daimones (demons) could be good or evil, the Jews became ready prey to demonic control.

A constructive change involved local worship. Synagogues sprang up as the places where neighborhood congregations of Jews met for religious education and services. Exactly when, where, and how Jewish synagogues got started is not known. Since they filled the needs of Jews in distant lands for worship when they could not go to the temple, it is generally believed that synagogues were established in exilic or postexilic times. Significantly, they turned out to be fine forums for Jesus and his disciples to 'declare abroad the excellencies of God, the one calling people out of darkness into his wonderful light.' —1 Peter 2:9.

Judaism Embraced Various Schools of Thought

In the second century B.C.E., various schools of thought began to emerge. They were not separate religious organizations. Rather, they were small associations of Jewish clergy, philosophers, and political activists who sought to influence the people and control the nation, all under the umbrella of Judaism.

The politicized Sadducees were chiefly wealthy aristocrats, known for their adroit diplomacy ever since the Hasmonaean uprising in the mid-second century B.C.E. Most of them were priests, though some were businessmen and landowners. By the time Jesus was born, most Sadducees favored Roman rule of Palestine because they thought it was more stable and was likely to maintain the status quo. (Compare John 11: 47, 48.) A minority (Herodians) believed that rule by the family of Herod would better suit national sentiment. At any rate, the Sadducees did not want the nation to be in the hands of Jewish fanatics or to have anyone other than priests in control of the temple. Sadducean beliefs were conservative, mainly based on their interpretation of Moses' writings, and reflected their opposition to the powerful sect of the Pharisees. (Acts

23:6-8) The Sadducees rejected the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures as speculations. They taught that the Bible's historical, poetical, and proverbial books were uninspired and nonessential.

The Pharisees originated during the Grecian period as a vigorous reaction to anti-Jewish Hellenism. By Jesus' day, however, they were rigid, tradition-bound, legalistic, proud, self-righteous proselytizers and teachers who sought to control the nation through synagogue instruction. They came mainly from the middle class and disdained the common people. Jesus viewed most Pharisees as self-seeking, merciless money lovers who oozed hypocrisy. (Matthew, chapter 23) They accepted the entire Hebrew Scriptures in the light of their own explanations but attached equal or greater weight to their oral traditions. They said that their traditions were "a fence around the Law." Far from being a fence, however, their traditions invalidated the Word of God and perplexed the public.—Matthew 23:2-4; Mark 7:1, 9-13.

The Essenes were mystics who apparently lived in a few isolated communities. They regarded themselves as the true remnant of Israel, waiting in purity to receive the promised Messiah. The Essenes led a contemplative life of pious austerity, and many of their beliefs mirrored Persian and Greek concepts.

Several varieties of religiously motivated, fanatically patriotic Zealots murderously viewed as enemies everyone who got in the way of independent Jewish statehood. They have been likened to the Hasmonaeans and primarily appealed to idealistic, adventurous young men. Perceived as bandit-assassins or as resistance fighters, they employed guerrilla tactics that made country roads and public squares dangerous and added to the tensions of the day.

In Egypt, Greek philosophy flourished among Alexandrian Jews. From there it spread to Palestine and to the widely scattered Jews of the Diaspora. Jewish theorists who wrote the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha interpreted Moses' writings as vague, bland allegories.

By the time the Roman era had arrived, Hellenization had permanently transformed Palestine socially, politically, and philosophically. The Jews' Biblical religion had been replaced by Judaism, a blend of Babylonian, Persian, and Grecian concepts entwined with a certain amount of Scriptural truth. All together, however, Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes constituted less than 7 percent of the nation. Caught in the vortex of these conflicting forces were the masses of the Jewish people, "skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd."—Matthew 9:36.

Into that dark world stepped Jesus Christ. Comforting was his reassuring invitation: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you." (Matthew 11:28) How thrilling to hear him say: "I am the light of the world"! (John 8:12) And delightful, indeed, was his heartcheering promise: "He that follows me will by no means walk in darkness, but will possess the light of life."—John 8:12.

In Our Next Issue

What Must We Do to Be Saved?

Education—Use It to Praise Jehovah

Trust in Jehovah and His Word

A LEGAL BREAKTHROUGH

IN April of 1995, a significant court victory was won. It all started on January 28, 1992, when Luz Nereida Acevedo Quiles, 24, was admitted to El Buen Pastor Hospital in Puerto Rico for elective surgery. Upon admission, she stated both orally and in writing that as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, she would not accept a blood transfusion. (Acts 15:28, 29) The hospital personnel involved, including the doctor who treated her, were well aware of her wishes.

Two days after her operation, Luz lost an excessive amount of blood and developed acute anemia due to hemorrhaging. The attending physician, Dr. José Rodríguez Rodríguez, believed that the only way to help her was to administer a blood transfusion. Therefore, without her knowledge or consent, he sought a court order to transfuse Luz.

Although Luz was fully conscious and able to speak for herself, Dr. Rodríguez Rodríguez insisted that because of the urgency of the case, there was no time to get anyone's consent. The district attorney, Eduardo Pérez Soto, signed the form, and the district judge, the Honorable Ángel Luis Rodríguez Ramos, issued a court order for the blood transfusion.

Thus, on January 31, 1992, Luz was taken to the operating room, where she was transfused. During the transfusion, she heard some of the hospital personnel laughing. Others scolded her, saying that what was being done to her was for her own good. She fought to the best of her ability—all in vain. By the end of the day, Luz had received four units of blood.

Luz' case was neither the first nor the last involving blood transfusions and Jehovah's Witnesses in Puerto Rico. Prior to her experience, at least 15 court orders had been issued for blood transfusions against the wishes of adult Jehovah's Witnesses, and more have been issued since. Tragically, in one case the court order was acted on, and a blood transfusion was forced upon a patient while she was unconscious.

Luz' fight did not end in the operating room, however. In October 1993 a lawsuit was filed against the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The case was heard by the Superior Court, and on April 18, 1995, a decision was reached in her favor. The court stated that the order to transfuse blood was "unconstitutional and deprived the plaintiff of her right of free exercise of religion, her privacy and bodily self-determination without due process of law."

This ruling was significant, for it was the first time that a court in Puerto Rico had ruled in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses in a case concerning blood transfusion. The judgment elicited a tremendous reaction. A press conference was held, with major newspaper, radio, and television journalists present.

That same night a radio program aired an interview with one of Luz' attorneys. The audience was invited to phone in and ask questions. Many doctors and lawyers called and expressed their favorable reaction to the case. One caller said: "Science has not been able to ascertain that a blood transfusion will save lives, and it is a fallacy to think that way." He also stated: "Soon, blood transfusions will go down in history as one of the biggest aberrations and mistakes of modern medicine."

A highly esteemed law professor later called the Watch Tower Society's branch office and expressed his deep satisfaction with what he termed "a resounding victory." He added that the court ruling champions the constitutional rights, not of Jehovah's Witnesses alone, but of all citizens of Puerto Rico.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Ephesians 3:14, 15 says that to God "every family in heaven and on earth owes its name." Are there families in heaven, and does each human family somehow get its name from Jehovah?

There are no families in heaven such as there are on earth, with a father, a mother, and children—all related to one another in a fleshly way. (Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:50) Jesus indicated clearly that angels do not marry, and nothing suggests that they in any way produce offspring. —Matthew 22:30.

However, the Bible speaks in a figurative way of Jehovah God as being married to his heavenly organization; he is married in a spiritual sense. (Isaiah 54:5) That heavenly organization produces offspring, such as the angels. (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:4-7) In this sense, then, there exists a wonderful spiritual family in heaven.

Moreover, a new figurative family is developing in heaven, consisting of Jesus Christ and his congregational bride of 144,000. (2 Corinthians 11:2) Most of these anointed ones have already died, with heavenly life in view. Some are still alive on earth. All eagerly look forward to the heavenly "marriage of the Lamb." The Bible links that marriage to the time of the approaching great tribulation—the destruction of Babylon the Great, and then the elimination of the rest of Satan's system.—Revelation 18:2-5; 19:2, 7, 11-21; Matthew 24:21.

Regarding earthly families, the apostle Paul is not indicating at Ephesians 3:15 that every individual family group gets its name directly from Jehovah. Rather, Paul evidently has in mind extended family lines that preserve a name. Joshua 7:16-19 provides an example. Jehovah was there uncovering the sin of Achan. First, guilt was focused on or limited to the tribe of Judah. Then it was narrowed down to the family of the Zerahites. Finally, the household of Achan was exposed. Achan along with his wife and children were viewed, or spoken of, as part of the household (or, family) of Zabdi, Achan's grandfather. That family, in turn, was the extended group that preserved the name of their ancestor Zerah.

Among the Hebrews, such family lines were of great importance, many being listed in the Bible. God supported their preservation by making provision, where necessary, for heirs to pass on the family name through Levirate, or brother-in-law, marriage.—Genesis 38:8, 9; Deuteronomy 25:5, 6.

As another example of such larger or extended families, consider Jesus as the son of David. He obviously was not the direct offspring of King David, not being born until centuries after David's death. Yet, an identifying mark of the Messiah was that he was to be of the family of David, as the Jews in general knew. (Matthew 22:42) Jesus was in David's line through both his mother and his adoptive father.—Matthew 1:1; Luke 2:4.

But how do such families get their names from Jehovah? The fact is that there were a few occasions—such as in the case of Abraham and Isaac—when Jehovah literally named a family head. (Genesis 17:5, 19) Those were exceptions. For the most part, Jehovah does not give each individual family the name that it passes on to children.

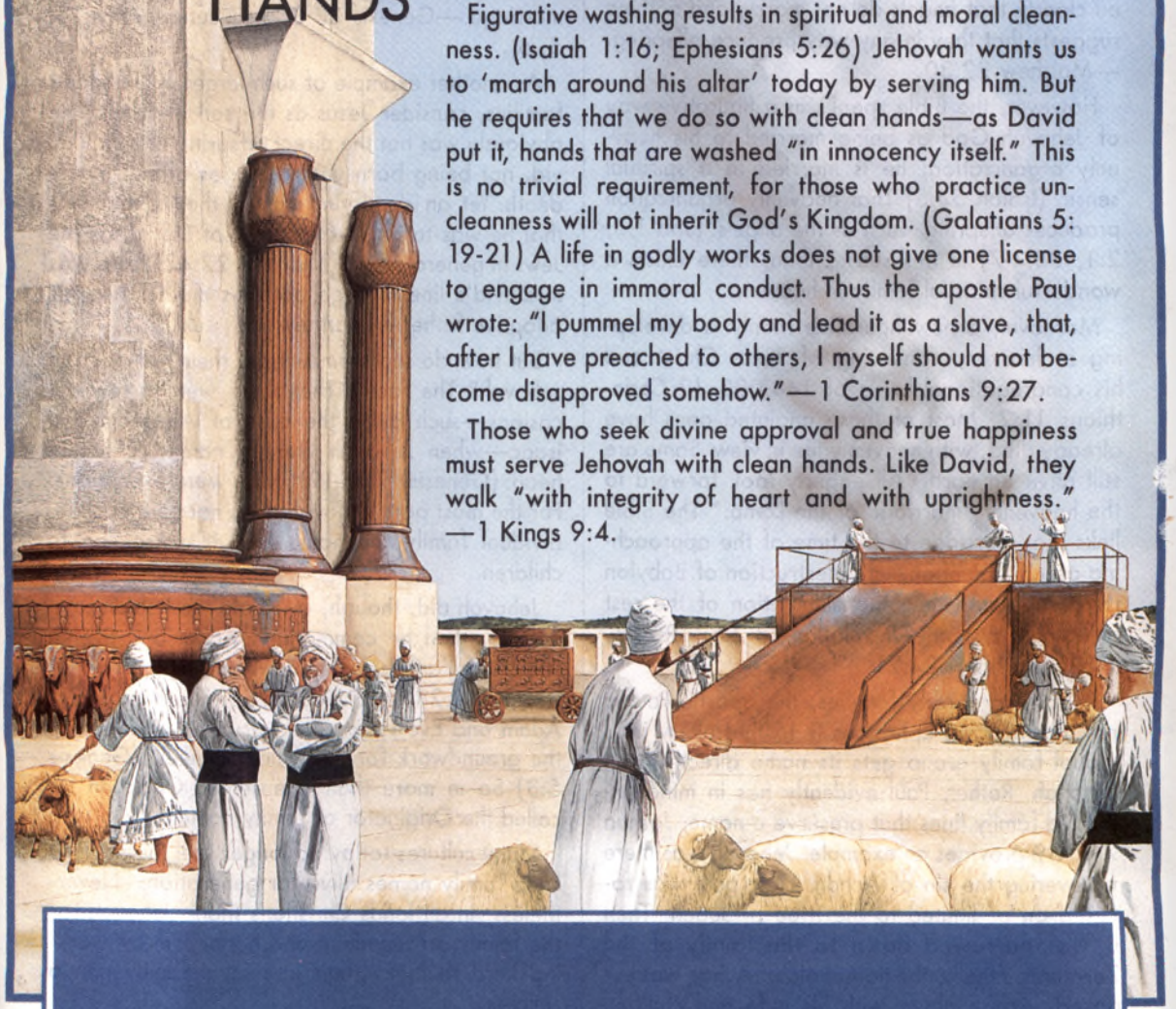
Jehovah did, though, originate the human family unit when he commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and become many and fill the earth." (Genesis 1:28) And Jehovah permitted imperfect Adam and Eve to produce offspring, thus laying the groundwork for all human families. (Genesis 5:3) So in more than one sense, God can be called the Originator of family names.

Many cultures today no longer feel the need to keep family names alive for generations. Nevertheless, in all lands Christians thank Jehovah for the family arrangement and honor him by working hard to make their individual family unit a success.

WORSHIP JEHOVAH WITH CLEAN HANDS

UNDER inspiration, the psalmist David sang: "I shall wash my hands in innocency itself, and I will march around your altar, O Jehovah." —Psalm 26:6.

In composing these words, David may have been alluding to the custom of Israel's Levite priests to ascend the altar ramp and then place their sacrifices upon the fire. But before performing this act of worship, the priests were required to wash their hands and feet. This was no minor detail. Failure to take this preliminary step could cost a priest his life!—Exodus 30:18-21.

Figurative washing results in spiritual and moral cleanness. (Isaiah 1:16; Ephesians 5:26) Jehovah wants us to 'march around his altar' today by serving him. But he requires that we do so with clean hands—as David put it, hands that are washed "in innocency itself." This is no trivial requirement, for those who practice uncleanness will not inherit God's Kingdom. (Galatians 5:19-21) A life in godly works does not give one license to engage in immoral conduct. Thus the apostle Paul wrote: "I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow."—1 Corinthians 9:27.

Those who seek divine approval and true happiness must serve Jehovah with clean hands. Like David, they walk "with integrity of heart and with uprightness." —1 Kings 9:4.