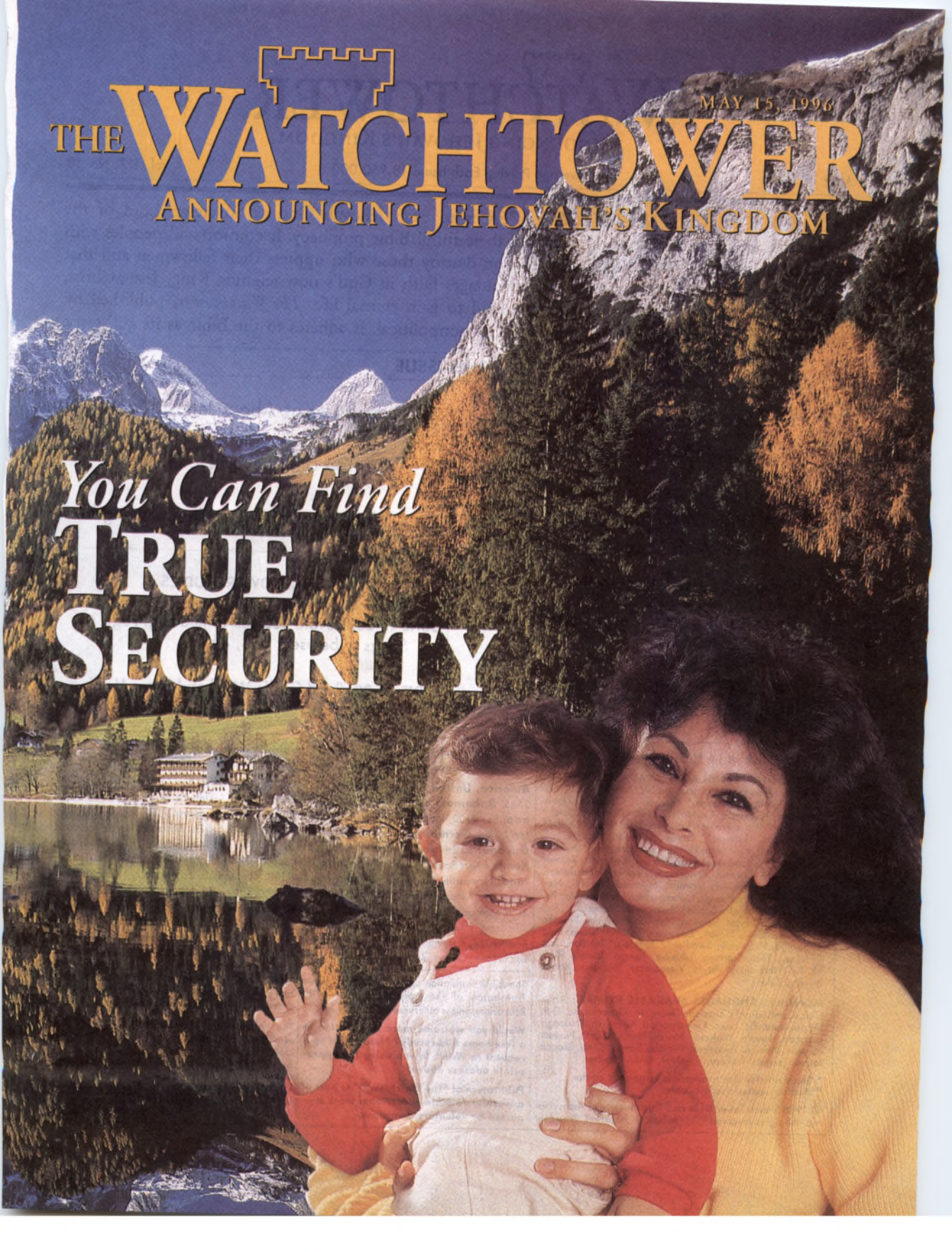


The background of the entire page is a scenic photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a yellow turtleneck sweater, is smiling and holding a young child. The child is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and white overalls, and is also smiling. Behind them, a calm lake reflects the surrounding scenery. On the opposite shore, there is a small village with a prominent building that has a red roof. The background is dominated by steep, rocky mountains with patches of green and yellow trees, suggesting an autumn setting. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

MAY 15, 1996

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

You Can Find
**TRUE
SECURITY**

THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

May 15, 1996

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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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TRUE SECURITY

ARNOLD was a child who loved his stuffed toy tiger. Everywhere he went, he dragged it along with him—at play, to the dinner table, to his bed. For him, the tiger provided comfort, security. One day, there was a crisis. Tiger was missing!

As Arnold cried, his mother, father, and three older brothers scoured their large house to find the tiger. One of them eventually discovered it in a drawer. Evidently, Arnold had put it there and then had promptly forgotten where it was. The tiger was returned, and Arnold wiped away his tears. He felt happy and secure again.

How fine it would be if all problems could be solved that easily—as simply as finding a toy tiger in a drawer! For most people, however, questions of security are far more serious and complex than that. Just about everywhere, people wonder, ‘Will I become a victim of crime or violence? Am I in danger of losing my job? Is my family sure to have enough food? Will others avoid me because of my religion or my ethnic background?’

The number of people who lack security is immense. According to the United Nations, nearly three billion lack access not

An Elusive Goal

only to treatment of common diseases but also to essential drugs. More than one billion people languish in extreme poverty. Nearly one billion, although able to work, are not productively employed. The number of refugees is increasing. By the end of 1994, about 1 in every 115 people on earth had been forced to flee from their homes. Millions of lives are ruined as a result of the \$500-billion-a-year narcotics trade that spawns countless acts of crime and violence. War devastates the lives of millions. During 1993 alone, 42 countries engaged in major conflicts, while 37 others experienced political violence.

War, poverty, crime, and other threats to human security are interrelated, and they are growing in number. There are no tiger-in-a-drawer solutions to such problems. In fact, humans will not solve them at all.

“Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs,” cautions God’s Word, the Bible. In whom, then, can we trust? This scripture continues: “Happy is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in Jehovah his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, of the sea, and of all that is in them.”—Psalm 146:3-6.

Why can we trust in Jehovah to bring security to this earth? Is it possible to enjoy secure, happy lives now? How will God remove the barriers to human security?



TRUE SECURITY

THERE is no question that Jehovah God can provide security for his people. He is "the Almighty One." (Psalm 68:14) His unique name means "He Causes to Become." This identifies him as the only One in the universe able to overcome any obstacle in order to fulfill his promises and accomplish his will. God himself states: "So my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it." —Isaiah 55:11.

God provides security for those who trust in him. His Word guarantees this. "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower," stated wise King Solomon under divine inspiration. "Into it the righteous runs and is given protection." He further said: "He that is trusting in Jehovah will be protected." —Proverbs 18:10; 29:25.

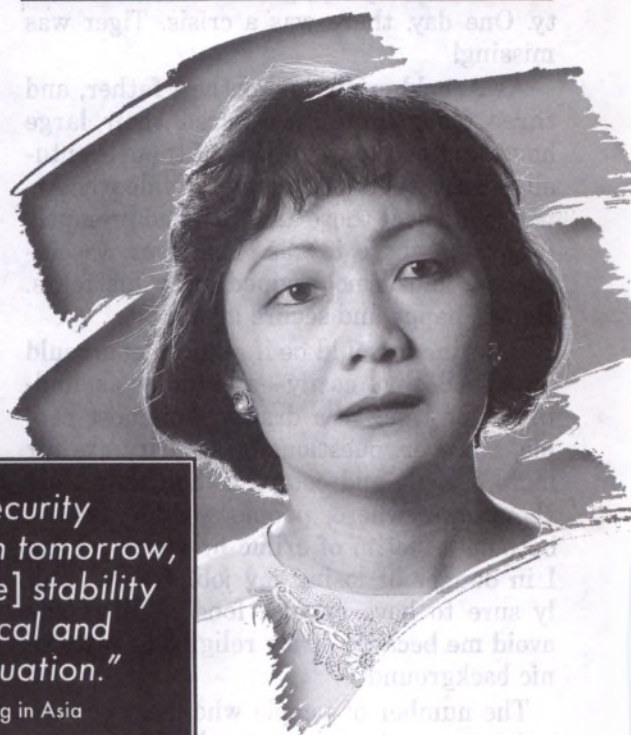
Security for God's Servants

Jehovah has always provided security for those who rely on him. For example, the prophet Jeremiah enjoyed God's protection. When the armies of Babylon laid siege to apostate Jerusalem, people had to "eat bread by weight and in anxious care." (Ezekiel 4:16) The situation became so critical that some women boiled and ate their own children. (Lamentations 2:20; 4:10) Even though Jeremiah was then held in custody because

*Now and
Forever*

*"Human security
indicates faith in tomorrow,
... [faith in the] stability
of the political and
economic situation."*

—A woman living in Asia



of his fearless preaching, Jehovah saw to it that "there was a giving of a round loaf of bread to him daily from the street of the bakers, until all the bread was exhausted from the city." —Jeremiah 37:21.

When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, Jeremiah was neither killed nor dragged off as a prisoner to Babylon. Instead, "the [Babylonian] chief of the bodyguard ... gave him

a food allowance and a present and let him go.”—Jeremiah 40:5.

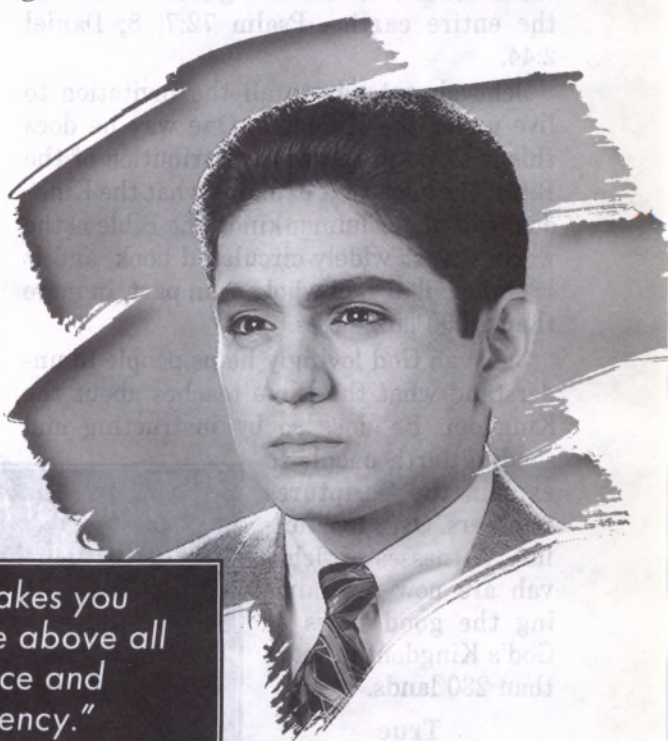
Centuries later Jesus Christ assured God’s servants: “Never be anxious and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or, ‘What are we to drink?’ or, ‘What are we to put on?’ For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.”—Matthew 6:31-33.

Does this mean that Jehovah’s servants will enjoy divine protection from all present-day calamity? No, it does not. Faithful ones are not immune to harm. True Christians get sick, experience persecution, become victims of crime, die in accidents, and suffer in other ways.

Although Jehovah does not yet furnish *total* security from harm, reports show that he does use his power to provide for his servants and protect them. Christians are also shielded from many problems because they apply Bible principles in their lives. (Proverbs 22:3) Furthermore, they enjoy the security of a worldwide association of loving spiritual brothers and sisters, who help one another in times of need. (John 13:34, 35; Romans 8:28) For example, in response to the desperate plight of their brothers from war-torn Rwanda, Jehovah’s Witnesses in Europe quickly donated and sent them 65 tons of clothing and \$1,600,000 worth of medicine, food, and other supplies.—Compare Acts 11:28, 29.

Though Jehovah permits trials to befall true Christians, they have the assurance that he will give them the strength, assis-

tance, and wisdom to endure. Writing to fellow believers, the apostle Paul said: “No temptation [trial] has taken you except what is common to men. But God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted [tried] beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation [trial] he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it.”—1 Corinthians 10:13; *The Emphatic Diaglott*.



*“What makes you
feel insecure above all
is violence and
delinquency.”*

—A man who lives in South America

What God Does for His People

Today, millions of people delight to do God’s will. They are not forced to serve God; they do so because they know and love him. In turn, because Jehovah loves his loyal servants, he purposes to transform the earth into a paradise where obedient mankind will enjoy peace, health, and security forever.—Luke 23:43.

God will do this by means of a heavenly government, having his appointed King, Jesus Christ, as its Ruler. (Daniel 7:13, 14) The Bible refers to this government as "God's kingdom" and as "the kingdom of the heavens." (1 Corinthians 15:50; Matthew 13:44) God's Kingdom will replace all human governments. Instead of having many governments on earth, there will be only one government. It will rule in righteousness over the entire earth.—Psalm 72:7, 8; Daniel 2:44.

Jehovah extends to all the invitation to live under the Kingdom. One way he does this is through the wide distribution of the Bible, the book that explains what the Kingdom will do for humankind. The Bible is the world's most widely circulated book, and it is now available, in whole or in part, in more than 2,000 languages.

Jehovah God lovingly helps people to understand what the Bible teaches about the Kingdom. He does so by instructing and sending forth people to explain the Scriptures to others. Over five million Witnesses of Jehovah are now proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom in more than 230 lands.

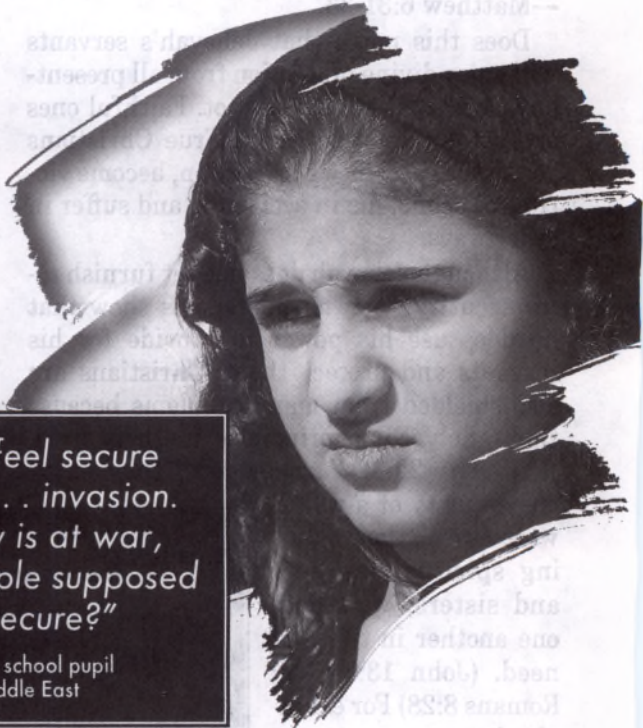
True Security for All?

Will everyone accept the invitation to become a subject of God's Kingdom by conforming to his righteous standards? No, because many people have no interest in doing God's will. They reject efforts to help them change their lives for the better. Indeed, they show themselves to be like those concerning whom Jesus said: "The heart of this people has grown unreceptive, and with their ears they have heard without

response, and they have shut their eyes; that they might never see with their eyes and hear with their ears and get the sense of it with their hearts and turn back, and [God] heal them."—Matthew 13:15.

How can there ever be true security on earth amid those who refuse to live in harmony with God's righteous ways? There cannot be. Godless people threaten the security of those who want to serve Jehovah.

God does not force people to change, but



*"I did not feel secure
during the . . . invasion.
If a country is at war,
how are people supposed
to feel secure?"*

—A primary school pupil
in the Middle East

neither will he tolerate wickedness indefinitely. Although Jehovah patiently continues to send his Witnesses to teach people about his ways and purposes, he will not continue to do so much longer. Jesus Christ foretold: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."—Matthew 24:14.

What will “the end” mean for those who reject God’s standards? It will mean their adverse judgment and destruction. The Bible speaks about the bringing of “vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction.”—2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

At Last —True Security Forever!

Following the destruction of those who reject Jehovah’s ways of peace, God’s Kingdom will usher in a glorious era of security for the benefit of the righteous ones on earth. (Psalm 37:10, 11) What a contrast that new world will be to the one we live in today! —2 Peter 3:13.

Famine and hunger will be no more. Everyone will have plenty to eat. The Bible says that ‘all the peoples will enjoy a banquet of well-oiled dishes.’ (Isaiah 25:6) There will be no shortage of food, for “there will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow.”—Psalm 72:16.

No longer will people dwell in shacks and shantytowns. Under God’s Kingdom, all will have fine homes, and they will eat food produced on their own land. The Bible promises: “They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage.”—Isaiah 65:21.

Instead of widespread unemployment, there will be productive work, and people will see good results from it. God’s Word says: “The work of their own hands my cho-

sen ones will use to the full. They will not toil for nothing.”—Isaiah 65:22, 23.

Under Kingdom rule, people will not suffer and die from disease. God’s Word assures us: “No resident will say: ‘I am sick.’”—Isaiah 33:24.

In the earthly Paradise soon to become a reality, suffering and pain, sorrow and death, will be done away with. Yes, even death! People will live forever in Paradise! The Bible tells us that God “will wipe out



“I shall feel secure when I know that I can walk the streets at night without being raped.”

—A schoolgirl in Africa

every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”—Revelation 21:4.

Under the rulership of Jesus Christ, the “Prince of Peace,” life on earth will at last be truly secure. Indeed, worldwide security will exist under the righteous, loving rule of one government—God’s Kingdom.—Isaiah 9:6, 7; Revelation 7:9, 17.

A Little Girl Who Spoke With Courage

DURING the tenth century B.C.E., relations between Israel and Syria were strained. Outbreaks of fighting were so common that when three years elapsed without violence, it was a matter for the historic record.—1 Kings 22:1.

Especially threatening in those times were the Syrian marauder bands, some consisting of hundreds of soldiers. These warriors would raid and plunder the Israelites, abducting and enslaving many—even children.

During one raid, "a little girl" was mercilessly torn away from her God-fearing family. (2 Kings 5:2) Taken to Syria, she was forced to live among those whom she may have found frightening and strange—a people who worshiped the sun, moon, stars, trees, plants, and even stones. How different they were from her family and friends, who worshiped the one true God, Jehovah! Even in this strange environment, however, this girl exhibited outstanding courage regarding the worship of Jehovah. As a result, she changed the life of a prominent official serving under the king of Syria. Let us see how.

The Courage to Speak Up

The little girl is left unnamed in the Bible account. She became a maidservant to the wife of Naaman, a valiant army chief under King Ben-hadad II. (2 Kings 5:1) Though he was highly esteemed, Naaman had the loathsome disease leprosy.

Perhaps the girl's respectful manner moved Naaman's wife to confide in her. The woman may have asked the girl, 'What is done for

lepers in Israel?' This Israelite maiden was not ashamed to state boldly: "If only my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria! In that case he would recover him from his leprosy."—2 Kings 5:3.

This girl's words were not shrugged off as a childish fantasy. On the contrary, they were reported to King Ben-hadad, who sent Naaman and others on a 100-mile journey to Samaria in search of this prophet.—2 Kings 5:4, 5.

The Healing of Naaman

Naaman and his men went to King Jehoram of Israel, bearing a letter of introduction from Ben-hadad and a sizable monetary gift. Not surprisingly, calf-worshiping King Jehoram did not display the faith in God's prophet that the servant girl did. Instead, he thought that Naaman had come seeking a quarrel. When God's prophet Elisha heard of Jehoram's apprehension, he at once sent a message requesting that the king send Naaman to his house.—2 Kings 5:6-8.

When Naaman arrived at Elisha's house, the prophet sent out a messenger who told him: "You must bathe seven times in the Jordan that your flesh may come back to you; and be clean." (2 Kings 5:9, 10) Naaman was infuriated. Expecting a miraculous and ostentatious display, he asked: "Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Can I not bathe in them and certainly be clean?" Naaman turned away from Elisha's house in a rage. But when Naaman's servants



reasoned with him, he finally yielded. After bathing seven times in the Jordan River, "his flesh came back like the flesh of a little boy and he became clean."—2 Kings 5:11-14.

Returning to Elisha, Naaman said: "Here, now, I certainly know that there is no God anywhere in the earth but in Israel." Naaman vowed that he would "no more render up a burnt offering or a sacrifice to any other gods but to Jehovah."—2 Kings 5:15-17.

Lessons for Us

Naaman would not have gone to the prophet Elisha if a young servant girl had not spoken up courageously. Today, many youths are acting in a similar way. At school, they may be surrounded by students who have no interest in serving God. Nevertheless, they speak up about what they believe. Some of them begin doing so at a remarkably tender age.

Consider Alexandra, a five-year-old girl in Australia. When she started school, her mother made an appointment to explain the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses to the teacher. But Alexandra's mother was in for a surprise. "I am already familiar with a number of your beliefs, as well as what Alexandra will and will not do at school," the teacher said. Alexandra's mother was amazed, since there were no other Witness children at the school. "Alexandra filled us in," the teacher explained. Yes, this little girl had already had a tactful discussion with her teacher.

Such young ones courageously speak out. They thus act in harmony with Psalm 148:12, 13: "You young men and also you virgins, you old men together with boys. Let them praise the name of Jehovah, for his name alone is unreachably high. His dignity is above earth and heaven."

DEVOTE YOURSELF TO READING

"While I am coming, continue applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching."—1 TIMOTHY 4:13.

JEHOVAH GOD has given mankind the wonderful ability of learning to read and write. He has also provided his Word, the Bible, so that we can be well instructed. (Isaiah 30:20, 21) In effect, its pages enable us to "walk" with God-fearing patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We can "see" such godly women as Sarah, Rebekah, and the loyal Moabitess Ruth. Yes, and we can "hear" Jesus Christ give his Sermon on the Mount. All this pleasure and grand instruction from the Holy Scriptures can be ours if we are good readers.

² Undoubtedly, the perfect man Jesus

1. How can we benefit from reading the Bible?
2. What indicates that Jesus and his apostles could read well?



Christ had excellent reading ability, and he certainly knew the Hebrew Scriptures very well. When tempted by the Devil, therefore, Jesus repeatedly referred to them and said, "It is written." (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) On one occasion at the synagogue in Nazareth, he publicly read and applied to himself a portion of Isaiah's prophecy. (Luke 4:16-21) What about Jesus' apostles? In their writings, they often quoted the Hebrew Scriptures. Though the Jewish rulers viewed Peter and John as unlettered and ordinary because they were not educated in Hebrew schools of higher learning, their divinely inspired letters clearly prove that they could read and write well. (Acts 4:13) But is the ability to read really important?

"Happy Is He Who Reads Aloud"

³ Taking in and applying accurate knowledge of the Scriptures can result in life eternal. (John 17:3) Jehovah's Witnesses therefore realize that it is vitally important to read and study the Holy Scriptures and the Christian publications provided by God through the faithful and discreet slave class of anointed Christians. (Matthew 24:45-47) In fact, by using specially designed Watch Tower publications, thousands have been taught to read and thus acquire life-giving knowledge of God's Word.

3. Why is it so important to read the Scriptures and Christian publications?

⁴ Happiness results from reading, studying, and applying God's Word. This is so because we thereby please and honor God, receive his blessing, and experience joy. Jehovah wants his servants to be happy. Hence, he commanded the priests to read his Law to the people of ancient Israel. (Deuteronomy 31:9-12) When Ezra the copyist and others read the Law to all the people assembled in Jerusalem, its meaning was made clear, and the result was "a great rejoicing." (Nehemiah 8:6-8, 12) The Christian apostle Paul later told his coworker Timothy: "While I am coming, continue applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching." (1 Timothy 4:13) Another translation reads: "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture."—*New International Version*.

⁵ That our happiness depends on reading and applying God's Word is made clear at Revelation 1:3. There we are told: "Happy is he who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and who observe the things written in it; for the appointed time is near." Yes, we need to read aloud and hear the prophetic words of God in Revelation and throughout the Scriptures. The truly happy person is the one whose "delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night." The result? "Everything he does will succeed." (Psalm 1:1-3) For good reasons, therefore, Jehovah's organization urges each one of us to read and study his Word privately, as families, and with friends.

Think Actively and Meditate

⁶ How can you get the most out of your

4. (a) Why does happiness result from reading, studying, and applying God's Word? (b) As regards reading, what did Paul tell Timothy?

5. How does Revelation 1:3 link happiness with reading?

6. What was Joshua instructed to read, and how was this beneficial?

reading of God's Word and Christian publications? You are likely to find it beneficial to do what was done by Joshua, a God-fearing leader of ancient Israel. He was commanded: "This book of the law should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an undertone read in it day and night, in order that you may take care to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way successful and then you will act wisely." (Joshua 1:8) 'Reading in an undertone' means saying the words to yourself in a low voice. This is a memory aid, for it impresses the material on the mind. Joshua was to read in God's Law "day and night," or regularly. That was the way to be successful and to act wisely in discharging God-given responsibilities. Such regular reading of God's Word can help you in a similar way.

⁷ Do not let the idea of speed dominate when reading God's Word. If you have planned to spend a period of time reading the Bible or some Christian publication, you may want to take your time. This is particularly important when you are studying with the object of remembering significant points. And when you read, think actively. Analyze the Bible writer's statements. Ask yourself, 'What is his point? What should I do with this information?'

⁸ Take time to meditate while reading the Holy Scriptures. This will help you to remember Bible accounts and to apply Scriptural principles. Meditating on God's Word and thus fixing points in your mind will also enable you to speak from the heart, giving sincere inquirers fine answers instead of saying something that you may later regret. Says a divinely inspired proverb: "The heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer."—Proverbs 15:28.

7. Why should we not let the idea of speed dominate when we read God's Word?

8. Why is it beneficial to meditate when reading the Scriptures?

Associate New Points With Old

⁹ Most Christians must admit that at one time they knew little about God, his Word, and his purposes. Today, however, these Christian ministers, starting with creation and man's fall into sin, can explain the purpose of Christ's sacrifice, can tell of the destruction of this wicked system of things, and can show how obedient mankind will be blessed with eternal life on a paradise earth. This is possible largely because these servants of Jehovah have taken in "the very knowledge of God" by studying the Bible and Christian publications. (Proverbs 2:1-5) They have gradually associated new points learned with older ones already understood.

¹⁰ Associating new Scriptural points with ones you already know is beneficial and rewarding. (Isaiah 48:17) When Bible laws, principles, or even somewhat abstract ideas are presented, associate these with what you already know. Fit the information into what you have learned about "the pattern of healthful words." (2 Timothy 1:13) Look for information that may help you to strengthen your relationship with God, improve your Christian personality, or assist you to share Bible truths with others.

¹¹ When reading something that the Bible says about conduct, try to discern the principle involved. Meditate on it, and decide what you would do under similar circumstances. Jacob's son Joseph consistently refused to engage in sexual immorality with Potiphar's wife, asking: "How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?" (Genesis 39:7-9) In this moving account, you find an underlying principle—sexual immorality is a sin against God.

9, 10. How can your Bible reading be enhanced by associating new Scriptural points with ones you already know?

11. What might you do when reading something that the Bible says about conduct? Illustrate.

ple—sexual immorality is a sin against God. You can mentally associate this principle with other statements in God's Word, and you can remember it with profit if tempted to engage in such wrongdoing.—1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Visualize Scriptural Incidents

¹² To impress points on your mind as you read, visualize what is occurring. Mentally see the terrain, the homes, the people. Hear their voices. Smell the bread baking in an oven. Relive the scenes. Then your reading will be a moving experience, for you may see an ancient city, ascend a lofty mountain, marvel at the wonders of creation, or associate with men and women of great faith.

¹³ Suppose you are reading Judges 7:19-22. Visualize what is taking place. Judge Gideon and three hundred valiant Israelite men have taken their places on the edge of the Midianite camp. It is about ten o'clock in the evening, the beginning of the "middle night watch." The Midianite sentries have just been posted, and darkness covers the encampment of Israel's sleeping enemies. Look! Gideon and his men are equipped with horns. They have large water jars that cover torches held in their left hands. Suddenly, the three bands of a hundred each blow the horns, shatter the jars, raise the torches aloft, and shout: "Jehovah's sword and Gideon's!" You look at the camp. Why, the Midianites get on the run and break into shouting! As the three hundred continue blowing their horns, God sets the swords of the Midianites against one another. Midian has been put to flight, and Jehovah has given Israel the victory.

12. Why visualize Bible accounts as you read them?

13. How would you describe what is recorded at Judges 7:19-22?



When reading the Bible as a family, visualize the accounts and meditate on their significance

Learning Valuable Lessons

¹⁴ By reading God's Word, we can learn many lessons. For example, perhaps you want to impress your children with the need to be humble. Well, it should be easy to visualize and get the point of what was said in the prophecy of Gideon's son Jotham. Begin reading at Judges 9:8. "Once upon a time," said Jotham, "the trees went to anoint a king over them." The olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine refused to rule. But the lowly bramble was glad to become a ruler. Having read the account aloud to your children, you might explain that the valuable plants represented worthy persons who did not seek the position of kingship over their fellow Israelites. The bramble, which was useful only for fuel, represented the kingship of proud Abimelech, a murderer who wanted to dominate others but met an end in fulfillment of Jotham's prophecy. (Judges, chapter 9)

14. How might Judges chapter 9 be used to teach a child the need to be humble?

What child would want to grow up and become like a bramble?

¹⁵ The importance of loyalty is made clear in the Bible book of Ruth. Suppose members of your family are taking turns reading that account aloud and trying to absorb what it says. You see the Moabitess Ruth on a journey to Bethlehem with her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, and you hear Ruth say: "Your people will be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16) Industrious Ruth is seen gleaning behind the harvesters in the field of Boaz. You hear him compliment her, saying: "Everyone in the gate of my people is aware that you are an excellent woman." (Ruth 3:11) Soon, Boaz marries Ruth. In harmony with the arrangement for brother-in-law marriage, by Boaz she bears a son "to Naomi." Ruth becomes

15. How is the importance of loyalty highlighted in the book of Ruth?

an ancestress of David and eventually of Jesus Christ. She thus received "a perfect wage." Moreover, those reading the Scriptural account learn a valuable lesson: Be loyal to Jehovah, and you will be richly blessed. —Ruth 2:12; 4:17-22; Proverbs 10:22; Matthew 1:1, 5, 6.

¹⁶ The account of the Hebrews named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego can help us to be faithful to God in trialsome situations. Visualize the event as Daniel chapter 3 is read aloud. A huge image of gold towers above the plain of Dura, where Babylonian officials have been assembled. At the sound of musical instruments, they fall down and worship the image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. That is, all except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do so. Respectfully, but firmly, they tell the king that they will not serve his gods and worship the image of gold. These young Hebrews are cast into a superheated furnace. But what happens? Looking inside, the king sees four able-bodied men, one of them "resembling a son of the gods." (Daniel 3:25)

16. What test did the three Hebrews undergo, and how can this account help us?

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ How does happiness depend on reading God's Word?
- ☐ Why meditate on what you read in the Bible?
- ☐ Why use association and visualization when reading the Scriptures?
- ☐ What are some lessons to be learned from Bible reading?
- ☐ Why read the Bible aloud as a family, and what bearing does reading have on the Christian ministry?

The three Hebrews are brought out of the furnace, and Nebuchadnezzar blesses their God. It has been rewarding to visualize the account. And what a lesson it provides regarding faithfulness to Jehovah under test!

Benefit From Reading the Bible as a Family

¹⁷ Your family can enjoy many benefits if you regularly spend time reading the Bible together. Beginning in Genesis, you can witness creation and peer into man's original Paradise home. You can share experiences of the faithful patriarchs and their families and follow the Israelites as they pass through the Red Sea dry-shod. You can see the shepherd lad David vanquish the Philistine giant Goliath. Your family can note the construction of Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem, can see its desolation by Babylonian hordes, and can view its reconstruction under Governor Zerubbabel. Along with humble shepherds near Bethlehem, you can hear the angelic announcement of Jesus' birth. You can get details about his baptism and his ministry, can see him give up his human life as a ransom, and can share the joy of his resurrection. Next, you can travel with the apostle Paul and observe the establishment of congregations as Christianity spreads. Then, in the book of Revelation, your family can enjoy the apostle John's grand vision of the future, including Christ's Thousand Year Reign.

¹⁸ If you are reading the Bible aloud as a family, read it with clarity and enthusiasm. When reading some portions of the Scriptures, one family member—possibly the father—might read the words of the general account. Others of you can assume the roles

17. Briefly cite some of the beneficial things your family can learn by reading the Bible together.

18, 19. What suggestions are offered regarding family Bible reading?

of Bible characters, reading your parts with suitable feeling.

¹⁹ As you share in Bible reading as a family, your ability to read may improve. Likely, your knowledge of God will increase, and this should draw you closer to him. Asaph sang: "As for me, the drawing near to God is good for me. In the Sovereign Lord Jehovah I have placed my refuge, to declare all your works." (Psalm 73:28) This will help your family to be like Moses, who "continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible," that is, Jehovah God.—Hebrews 11:27.

Reading and the Christian Ministry

²⁰ Our desire to worship "the One who is invisible" should move us to work at being good readers. The ability to read well helps

20, 21. How is our preaching commission related to the ability to read?

us to bear witness from God's Word. It certainly helps us to carry on in the Kingdom-preaching work for which Jesus commissioned his followers when he said: "Go . . . and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8) Witnessing is the chief work of Jehovah's people, and reading ability helps us to accomplish it.

²¹ Effort is required to be a good reader and a skillful teacher of God's Word. (Ephesians 6:17) So, 'do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, handling the word of the truth aright.' (2 Timothy 2:15) Increase your knowledge of Scriptural truth and your ability as a Witness of Jehovah by devoting yourself to reading.

READ GOD'S WORD AND SERVE HIM IN TRUTH

"Instruct me, O Jehovah, about your way. I shall walk in your truth."

—PSALM 86:11.

JEHOVAH sends out light and truth. (Psalm 43:3) He also gives us the capacity to read his Word, the Bible, and learn the truth. This journal's first issue—July 1879—said: "Truth, like a modest little flower in the wilderness of life, is surrounded and *almost* choked by the luxuriant growth of the weeds of error. If you

1. In essence, what did the first issue of this magazine say about truth?

would find it you must be ever on the lookout. If you would see its beauty you must brush aside the weeds of error and the brambles of bigotry. If you would possess it you must stoop to get it. Be not content with *one* flower of truth. Had one been sufficient there would have been no more. Gather ever, seek for more." Reading and studying God's Word enables us to acquire accurate knowledge and walk in his truth.—Psalm 86:11.

² After Jerusalem's walls were rebuilt in 455 B.C.E., the priest Ezra and others read God's Law to the Jews. This was followed by a joyful Festival of Booths, confession of sins, and concluding "a trustworthy arrangement." (Nehemiah 8:1-9:38) We read: "They continued reading aloud from the book, from the law of the true God, it being expounded, and there being a putting of meaning into it; and they continued giving understanding in the reading." (Nehemiah 8:8) Some suggest that the Jews did not understand Hebrew well and that Aramaic paraphrasing was done. But the text does not indicate mere clarification of linguistic terms. Ezra and the others expounded the Law so that the people could grasp its principles and apply them. Christian publications and meetings also serve to 'put meaning into' God's Word. So do appointed elders, who are "qualified to teach."—1 Timothy 3:1, 2; 2 Timothy 2:24.

Lasting Benefits

³ When Christian families read the Bible together, they are likely to experience lasting benefits. They become acquainted with God's laws and learn the truth about doctrines, prophetic matters, and other subjects. After a portion of the Bible has been read, the head of the household might ask: How should this affect us? In what way does this relate to other Bible teachings? How can we use these points in preaching the good news? A family gains greater insight when reading the Bible if they do research by using the *Watch Tower Publications Index* or other indexes. The two volumes of *Insight on the Scriptures* can be consulted with benefits.

2. What resulted when Ezra and others read God's Law to the Jews in ancient Jerusalem?
3. What are some benefits gleaned from Bible reading?

⁴ Principles drawn from the Scriptures can guide us in life. Moreover, reading and studying 'the holy writings can make us wise for salvation.' (2 Timothy 3:15) If we let God's Word guide us, we will keep on walking in his truth and our righteous desires will be realized. (Psalm 26:3; 119:130) However, we need to seek understanding, as did Moses' successor, Joshua. The "book of the law" was not to depart from his mouth, and he was to read in it day and night. (Joshua 1:8) Not to let the "book of the law" depart from his mouth meant that Joshua was not to quit telling others the enlightening things it said. Reading in the Law day and night meant that Joshua was to meditate on it, was to study it. The apostle Paul similarly urged Timothy to "ponder over"—meditate on—his conduct, ministry, and teaching. As a Christian elder, Timothy needed to be especially careful that his life was exemplary and that he taught Scriptural truth.—1 Timothy 4:15.

⁵ God's truth is a priceless treasure. Finding it requires digging, persistent searching of the Scriptures. Only as childlike pupils of the Grand Instructor do we gain wisdom and come to understand the reverential fear of Jehovah. (Proverbs 1:7; Isaiah 30:20, 21) Of course, we should prove things Scripturally. (1 Peter 2:1, 2) Jews in Berea "were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things [said by Paul] were so." The Bereans were commended rather than rebuked for doing this.—Acts 17:10, 11.

⁶ Jesus told certain Jews: "You are searching the Scriptures, because you think that

4. How was Joshua to apply the instruction recorded at Joshua 1:8?
5. What is needed if we are to find God's truth?
6. Why could Jesus indicate that it did certain Jews no good to search the Scriptures?

by means of them you will have everlasting life; and these are the very ones that bear witness about me. And yet you do not want to come to me that you may have life.” (John 5: 39, 40) They searched the Scriptures with the right idea—that these could guide them to life. Indeed, the Scriptures contained Messianic prophecies that pointed to Jesus as the means of life. But the Jews rejected him. Searching the Scriptures, therefore, did them no good.

⁷ To grow in our understanding of the Bible, we need the guidance of God’s spirit, or active force. “The spirit searches into all things, even the deep things of God” so as to bring forth their meaning. (1 Corinthians 2:10) Christians in Thessalonica were to “make sure of all things” in any prophecies they heard. (1 Thessalonians 5: 20, 21) When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (about 50 C.E.), the only part of the Greek Scriptures already written was Matthew’s Gospel. So the Thessalonians and the Bereans could make sure of all things, likely by checking the Greek *Septuagint* version of the Hebrew Scriptures. They needed to read and study the Scriptures, and so do we.

Vital for All

⁸ Appointed elders should excel in Bible knowledge. They must be “qualified to teach” and must ‘hold firmly to the faithful word.’ The overseer Timothy was to ‘handle the word of the truth aright.’ (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:15) His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois had taught him the holy writings from infancy, instilling ‘unhypocritical faith’ in him,

7. What is needed to grow in understanding of the Bible, and why?

8. Why should appointed elders excel in Bible knowledge?



Parents, teach your children the Scriptures

though his father was an unbeliever. (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15) Believing fathers are to bring up their offspring “in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah,” and especially must elders who are fathers have ‘believing children that are not unruly or under a charge of debauchery.’ (Ephesians 6: 4; Titus 1:6) Regardless of our circumstances, then, we should take very seriously the need to read, study, and apply God’s Word.

⁹ We should also study the Bible in association with fellow believers. Paul wanted the Thessalonian Christians to discuss his counsel with one another. (1 Thessalonians 4:18) To sharpen our understanding of the truth, there is nothing better than joining other devoted students in examining the Scriptures. True is the proverb: “By iron, iron itself is sharpened. So one man sharpens the face of another.” (Proverbs 27:17) An iron tool can become rusty if it is not kept in use and sharpened. Similarly, we need to meet regularly and sharpen one another by sharing knowledge we have

9. Why study the Bible in association with fellow Christians?



gained from reading, studying, and meditating on God's Word of truth. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Moreover, this is one way to make sure that we benefit from flashes of spiritual light.—Psalm 97:11; Proverbs 4:18.

¹⁰ In our study of the Scriptures, we can appropriately pray to God as did the psalmist: "Send out your light and your truth. May these themselves lead me." (Psalm 43:3) If we desire to have God's approval, we must walk in his truth. (3 John 3, 4) This includes abiding by his requirements and serving him in faithfulness and sincerity. (Psalm 25:4, 5; John 4:23, 24) We must serve Jehovah in truth, as revealed in his Word and made clear in the publications of "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) This calls for accurate knowledge of the Scriptures. How, then, should we read and study God's Word? Should we start

10. What does it mean to walk in the truth?

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus quoted from various parts of the Hebrew Scriptures

reading it from Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, on through the 66 books? Yes, every Christian who has the complete Bible in his language should read it from Genesis to Revelation. And our objective in reading the Bible and Christian publications should be to increase our comprehension of the great body of Scriptural truth that God has made available through the 'faithful slave.'

Read God's Word Aloud

¹¹ We may read silently when alone. In ancient times, however, private reading was done aloud. As the Ethiopian eunuch rode in his chariot, the evangelizer Philip therefore *heard* him read from the prophecy of Isaiah. (Acts 8:27-30) The Hebrew word trans-

11, 12. Why is it beneficial to have the Bible read aloud at meetings?

lated "read" primarily means to "call." So those initially unable to read silently and get the sense of the reading should not be discouraged from pronouncing each word out loud. The principal thing is to learn the truth by reading God's written Word.

¹² It is beneficial to have the Bible read aloud at Christian meetings. The apostle Paul urged his coworker Timothy: "Continue applying yourself to *public reading*, to exhortation, to teaching." (1 Timothy 4:13) Paul told the Colossians: "When this letter has been read among you, arrange that it also be read in the congregation of the Laodiceans and that you also read the one from Laodicea." (Colossians 4:16) And Revelation 1:3 says: "Happy is he who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and who observe the things written in it; for the appointed time is near." Therefore, a public speaker should read texts from the Bible to support what he says to a congregation.

Topical Method of Study

¹³ Topical study is the most progressive method of learning Scriptural truths. Concordances, listing Bible words alphabetically in their context according to book, chapter, and verse, make it easy to locate texts related to a certain subject. And such scriptures can be harmonized with one another because the Bible's Author does not contradict himself. By holy spirit, he inspired some 40 men to write the Bible over a period of 16 centuries, and studying it topically is a time-tested way of learning the truth.

¹⁴ Our appreciation for Bible truth should motivate us to read and study the Chris-

tian Greek Scriptures along with the Hebrew Scriptures. This will show how the Greek Scriptures are linked with God's purpose and will shed light on Hebrew Scripture prophecies. (Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:4-6; Colossians 1:26) Very helpful in this regard is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. It was prepared by dedicated servants of God who took advantage of the increased knowledge available concerning the original Bible text as well as its background and idiomatic expressions. Vital, too, are the Bible study aids Jehovah has provided by means of "the faithful and discreet slave."

¹⁵ Some may say, 'Your publications make thousands of quotations from the Bible, but why do you take these from here and there?' By quoting from here and there in the Bible's 66 books, the publications draw upon several inspired witnesses to prove the truthfulness of a teaching. Jesus himself used this method of instruction. When he gave his Sermon on the Mount, he made 21 quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures. That discourse contains three quotations from Exodus, two from Leviticus, one from Numbers, six from Deuteronomy, one from Second Kings, four from Psalms, three from Isaiah, and one from Jeremiah. By doing this, was Jesus 'trying to prove just anything'? No, for 'he taught as a person having authority, and not as the scribes.' That was so because Jesus backed up his teaching with the authority of God's written Word. (Matthew 7:29) So did the apostle Paul.

¹⁶ In the scripture passage found at Romans 15:7-13, Paul quoted from three Hebrew Scripture sections—the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. He showed that

13. What is the most progressive method of learning Bible truths, and what can help us to locate scriptures?

14. Why study the Hebrew and Christian Greek Scriptures together?

15. How would you prove that it is appropriate to quote from here and there in the Bible?

16. What Scriptural quotations did Paul make at Romans 15:7-13?

Jews and Gentiles would glorify God, and Christians should thus welcome people of all nations. Paul said: "Welcome one another, just as the Christ also welcomed us, with glory to God in view. For I say that Christ actually became a minister of those who are circumcised in behalf of God's truthfulness, so as to verify the promises He made to their forefathers, and that the nations might glorify God for his mercy. Just as it is written [at Psalm 18:49]: 'That is why I will openly acknowledge you among the nations and to your name I will make melody.' And again he says [at Deuteronomy 32:43]: 'Be glad, you nations, with his people.' And again [at Psalm 117:1]: 'Praise Jehovah, all you nations, and let all the peoples praise him.' And again Isaiah [11:1, 10] says: 'There will be the root of Jesse, and there will be one arising to rule nations; on him nations will rest their hope.' May the God who gives hope fill you with all joy and peace by your believing, that you may abound in hope with power of holy spirit." By this topical method, Paul showed how to quote scriptures to establish Bible truths.

¹⁷ The apostle Peter's first inspired letter contains 34 quotations from ten books in the

17. In harmony with what precedent do Christians quote from here and there in the whole Bible?

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ What are some lasting benefits of Bible reading?
- ☐ Why study the Bible in association with fellow believers?
- ☐ Why is it proper to quote from various places throughout the Bible?
- ☐ What does it mean to 'walk in the truth,' and how can we do so?

Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. In his second letter, Peter quotes six times from three books. Matthew's Gospel has 122 quotations from Genesis to Malachi. In the 27 books of the Greek Scriptures, there are 320 direct quotations from Genesis to Malachi as well as hundreds of other references to the Hebrew Scriptures. In harmony with the precedent set by Jesus and followed by his apostles, when modern-day Christians make a topical study of a Scriptural subject, they quote from here and there in the whole Bible. This is especially fitting in these "last days," when most of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are being fulfilled. (2 Timothy 3:1) The 'faithful slave' makes such use of the Bible in its publications, but never does it add to God's Word or take away from it. —Proverbs 30:5, 6; Revelation 22:18, 19.

Always Walk in the Truth

¹⁸ We must not take anything away from the Bible, for the whole body of Christian teachings in God's Word is "the truth" or "the truth of the good news." Adherence to this truth—"walking" in it—is vital for salvation. (Galatians 2:5; 2 John 4; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Since Christianity is "the way of the truth," by assisting others in furthering its interests, we become "fellow workers in the truth."—2 Peter 2:2; 3 John 8.

¹⁹ If we are to "go on walking in the truth," we must read the Bible and avail ourselves of the spiritual help that God provides through the 'faithful slave.' (3 John 4) May we do this for our own good and so as to be in a position to teach others about Jehovah God, Jesus Christ, and the divine purpose. And let us be thankful that Jehovah's spirit helps us to understand his Word and succeed in serving him in truth.

18. Why 'walk in the truth'?

19. How can we "go on walking in the truth"?

"A time to keep quiet and a time to speak"

HOW many times have you lamented, "I wish I had not said that"? Yet, you may remember other occasions when you failed to speak out. In retrospect, you may have thought, 'I wish I had said something.'

The Bible says that there is "a time to keep quiet and a time to speak." (Ecclesiastes 3:7) Here, then, lies the problem—deciding when to speak and when to keep quiet. Our imperfect human nature frequently impels us to do and say things at the wrong time. (Romans 7:19) How can we control our unruly tongue?—James 3:2.

Ways to Tame the Tongue

To help us decide when to speak and when to remain silent, we do not need a long list designed to cover every possible situation. Rather, we need to be guided by qualities that are an intrinsic part of the Christian personality. What are these qualities?

Jesus Christ explained that love is the principal quality motivating his disciples. "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves," he said. (John 13:35) The more we display such brotherly love, the better we will control our tongue.

Two related qualities will also help enormously. One of these is humility. It enables us to 'consider others superior to ourselves.' (Philippians 2:3) The other is mildness, which keeps us "restrained under evil." (2 Timothy 2:24, 25) In Jesus Christ we have a perfect example of how these qualities should be exercised.

Since it is more difficult to control our tongue when we are under pressure, let us consider the night before Jesus' death—a time when he was "sorely troubled." (Matthew 26:37, 38) It is not surprising that Jesus felt this way, since the eternal future of all mankind depended on his remaining faithful to God.—Romans 5:19-21.

This certainly was a time for Jesus to speak to his heavenly Father. He therefore went off to pray, asking three of his disciples to keep on the watch. After some time he came and found them sleeping. At that he said to Peter: "Could you men not so much as watch one hour with me?" This loving reproof was accompanied by words that showed an understanding of their weaknesses. He said: "The spirit, of course, is eager, but the flesh is weak." Later, Jesus again came and found the disciples asleep. He spoke to them kindly and "went off and prayed for the third time."—Matthew 26:36-44.

When Jesus found the disciples sleeping a third time, he was not harsh but said: "At such a time as this you are sleeping and taking your rest! Look! The hour has drawn near for the Son of man to be betrayed into the hands of sinners." (Matthew 26:45) Only someone with a heart full of love, with a truly mild and humble disposition, could have used the tongue in that way at such a difficult time.—Matthew 11:29; John 13:1.

Soon thereafter, Jesus was arrested and put on trial. Here we learn that at times it is best to keep quiet, even when engaging in our Christian ministry. Intent on framing Jesus, the chief priests had no interest

whatsoever in learning the truth. So in this volatile atmosphere, Jesus remained silent. —Compare Matthew 7:6.

Jesus did not remain silent, however, when the high priest demanded: “By the living God I put you under oath to tell us whether you are the Christ the Son of God!” (Matthew 26:63) Since Jesus had been put under oath, it was time for him to speak. He therefore replied: “You yourself said it. Yet I say to you men, From henceforth you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”—Matthew 26:64.

During that momentous day, Jesus exercised perfect control of his tongue. In his case, love, mildness, and humility were innate parts of his personality. How can we use these qualities to control our tongue when we are under pressure?

Controlling the Tongue When Angry

When we get angry, we often lose control of our tongue. For example, Paul and Barnabas once had a difference of opinion. “Barnabas was determined to take along also John, who was called Mark. But Paul did not think it proper to be taking this one along with them, seeing that he had departed from them from Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. At this there occurred a sharp burst of anger, so that they separated from each other.” —Acts 15:37-39.

Michael,* who for some years has worked on construction projects, relates: “There was a person on the building site whom I knew well and respected. But he seemed to be constantly finding fault with my work. I felt hurt and irritated but kept my feelings to myself. One day things came to a head when he criticized a job I had just done.

“I gave vent to all my pent-up feelings. In

* Not his real name.



the heat of the moment, I was oblivious to the bad impression this must have made on all those around us. For the rest of the day, I did not want to talk to him or even see him. I realize now that I didn't handle the problem properly. It would have been much better to have kept quiet and spoken when I had cooled down.”

Happily, Christian love prompted these two individuals to resolve their differences. Michael explains: “After some frank communication, we understood each other better, and we now have a strong friendship.”

As Michael learned, if we find ourselves angry, it is sometimes wise to keep quiet. “A man of discernment is cool of spirit,” says Proverbs 17:27. Discernment and brotherly love will help us control our urge to blurt out what is hurtful. If we have been offended, let us speak to the other person *alone* in a mild and humble spirit, with a view to restoring peace. What if an outburst of anger has already occurred? Then love will move us to swallow our pride and humbly seek to make amends. This is a time to speak, to express regret and heal hurt feelings through sincere communication.—Matthew 5:23, 24.

When Silence Is Not a Solution

Anger or irritation could cause us to give the person who annoys us the silent treatment. This can be very damaging. “During the first year of our marriage, there

were occasions when I wouldn't speak to my husband for several days at a time," confesses María.* "Usually, it wasn't due to big problems but, rather, because of an accumulation of small irritations. I kept brooding about all these annoyances until they became a mountainlike obstacle. Then came the moment when I could stand it no longer, and I just stopped talking to my husband until my frustration would pass."

María adds: "A particular Bible text—'let the sun not set with you in a provoked state'—helped me readjust my thinking. My husband and I worked hard at improving communication so that problems didn't build up. It has not been easy, but after ten years of married life, I am happy to say that these periods of stony silence are much rarer. However, I must admit I am still working to control this tendency."—Ephesians 4:26.

As María discovered, when tensions exist between two people, a breakdown in communication is not a solution. Under those circumstances, resentment is likely to grow, and the relationship may be damaged. Jesus said that we should be 'quick about settling matters.' (Matthew 5:25) "A word spoken at the right time" can help us to 'pursue peace.'—Proverbs 25:11; 1 Peter 3:11.

* Not her real name.

Problems can be resolved through good communication



We also need to speak out when we need help. If we are suffering because of some spiritual problem, we may feel reluctant to burden others. But if we keep quiet, the problem may well get worse. Appointed Christian elders care for us and, if we will let them, are doubtless eager to help. This is a time when we should speak.—James 5:13-16.

Above all, we should speak to Jehovah regularly in heartfelt prayer, as Jesus did. Indeed, let us 'pour out our heart' to our heavenly Father.—Psalm 62:8; compare Hebrews 5:7.

"A Time to Speak" About God's Kingdom

The Christian ministry is a divine commission that must be fulfilled before the end comes. As never before, it is therefore vital that Jehovah's servants declare the good news of the Kingdom. (Mark 13:10) Like the apostles, true Christians just 'cannot stop speaking about the things they have seen and heard.'—Acts 4:20.

Of course, not everyone wants to hear the good news. In fact, when sending his disciples out to preach, Jesus advised them to 'search out those who were deserving.' Inasmuch as Jehovah never forces anyone to worship him, we would not stubbornly keep on speaking to someone who adamantly rejects the Kingdom message. (Matthew 10:11-14) But we are delighted to speak about Jehovah's kingship to those "rightly disposed for everlasting life."—Acts 13:48; Psalm 145:10-13.

Love, mildness, and humility are qualities that can help us to control our imperfect inclination to speak rashly or to lapse into a tense silence. As we grow in these qualities, we will be better equipped to distinguish between the right time and the wrong time to speak.

JONAH LEARNS ABOUT JEHOVAH'S MERCY

JEHOVAH has an assignment for his prophet Jonah. The time is the ninth century B.C.E., and Jeroboam II rules in Israel. Jonah is from Gath-hepher, a Zebulunite city. (Joshua 19:10, 13; 2 Kings 14:25) God is sending Jonah to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, over 500 miles northeast of his hometown. He is to warn the Ninevites that they face destruction by God.

Jonah may have thought: 'Go to that city and nation? They aren't even devoted to God. Those bloodthirsty Assyrians never entered into a covenant with Jehovah as the Israelites did. Why, people of that wicked nation may consider my warning a threat and conquer Israel! Not me! I won't go. I'll run to Joppa and sail off in the opposite direction—all the way to Tarshish, clear at the other end of the Great Sea. That's what I'll do!'—Jonah 1:1-3.

Peril at Sea!

Soon Jonah is in Joppa on the Mediterranean coast. He pays his fare and boards a ship bound for Tarshish, generally associated with Spain, over 2,200 miles west of Nineveh. Once at sea, the weary prophet goes below deck and falls asleep. Before long, Jehovah hurls a great wind at the sea, and each frightened mariner calls to his own god for aid. The ship is rolling and pitching so much that cargo is thrown overboard to lighten the vessel. Yet, shipwreck seems certain, and Jonah hears the excited captain exclaim: "What is the matter with you, sleeper? Get up, call out to your god!

Perhaps the true God will show himself caring about us, and we shall not perish." Jonah gets up and goes up onto the deck.—Jonah 1:4-6.

"Come, and let us cast lots," say the mariners, "that we may know on whose account we have this calamity." The lot falls on Jonah. Imagine his anxiety as the sailors say: "Do tell us, please, on whose account it is that we are having this calamity? What is your work, and from where do you come? What is your country, and from which people are you?" Jonah says that he is a Hebrew who worships "Jehovah the God of the heavens" and that he has reverential fear of "the One who made the sea and the dry land." The storm has come upon them because he is fleeing from the presence of Jehovah instead of obediently taking God's message to Nineveh.—Jonah 1:7-10.

The sailors ask: "What should we do to you, in order that the sea may become still for us?" As the sea grows more tempestuous, Jonah says: "Lift me up and hurl me into the sea, and the sea will become still for you; because I am aware that it is on my account that this great tempest is upon you." Unwilling to hurl Jehovah's servant into the sea and certain death, the men try to make it to dry land. Unsuccessful, the sailors call out: "Ah, now, O Jehovah, may we, please, not perish because of the soul of this man! And do not put upon us innocent blood, since you yourself, O Jehovah, have done according to what you have delighted in!"—Jonah 1:11-14.



Into the Sea!

At that the sailors throw Jonah overboard. As he sinks into the churning sea, its raging begins to cease. Seeing this, 'the men begin to fear Jehovah greatly, and so they offer a sacrifice to him and make vows.'—Jonah 1:15, 16.

As the water closes over Jonah, he is doubtless praying. Then he feels himself slipping along a soft channel as he slides into a larger cavity. Surprisingly, he can still breathe! Unwrapping seaweed from around his head, Jonah finds himself in a truly unique place. This is because "Jehovah appointed a great fish to swallow Jo-

nah, so that Jonah came to be in the inward parts of the fish three days and three nights."—Jonah 1:17.

Jonah's Fervent Prayer

In the belly of the giant fish, Jonah has time to pray. Some of his words bear a similarity to certain psalms. Jonah later recorded his prayers expressing both despair and contrition. For example, to him it seemed that the fish's belly would become Sheol, his grave. So he prayed: "Out of my distress I called out to Jehovah, and he proceeded to answer me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried for help. You heard my voice." (Jonah

2:1, 2) Two Songs of the Ascents—likely sung by Israelites going up to Jerusalem for annual festivals—express similar thoughts.—Psalm 120:1; 130:1, 2.

Reflecting on his descent into the sea, Jonah prays: “When you [Jehovah] threw me to the depths, into the heart [the midst] of the open sea, then a very river encircled me. All your breakers and your waves—over me they passed on.”—Jonah 2:3; compare Psalm 42:7; 69:2.

Jonah fears that his disobedience will cost him divine favor and that he will never again see God’s temple. He prays: “And as for me, I said, ‘I have been driven away from in front of your eyes! How shall I gaze again upon your holy temple?’” (Jonah 2:4; compare Psalm 31:22.) Jonah’s situation seems so bad that he says: “Waters encircled me clear to the soul [jeopardizing his life]; the watery deep itself kept enclosing me. Weeds [in the sea] were wound around my head.” (Jonah 2:5; compare Psalm 69:1.) Imagine Jonah’s plight, for he adds: “To the bottoms of the mountains I went down [inside the fish]. As for the earth, its bars [like those of a grave] were upon me for time indefinite. But out of the pit you proceeded to bring up my life [on the third day], O Jehovah my God.”—Jonah 2:6; compare Psalm 30:3.

Though he is in the fish’s belly, Jonah does not think: ‘I am so depressed that I cannot pray.’ Instead, he prays: “When my soul fainted away within me [in near death], Jehovah was the One whom I remembered [in faith, as the One of incomparable power and mercy]. Then my prayer came in to you, into your holy temple.” (Jonah 2:7) From the heavenly temple, God heard Jonah and saved him.

In conclusion Jonah prays: “As for those who are observing the idols of untruth [by

trusting in lifeless images of false gods], they leave their own loving-kindness [in forsaking the One who displays this quality]. But as for me, with the voice of thanksgiving I will sacrifice to you [Jehovah God]. What I have vowed [during this experience or on other occasions], I will pay. Salvation belongs to Jehovah.” (Jonah 2:8, 9; compare Psalm 31:6; 50:14.) Aware that only God can deliver him from death, the repentant prophet (like Kings David and Solomon before him) ascribes salvation to Jehovah.—Psalm 3:8; Proverbs 21:31.

Jonah Obeys

After much thought and earnest prayer, Jonah feels himself being forced out the channel through which he came in. Finally, he is thrown out on dry land. (Jonah 2:10) Grateful for deliverance, Jonah obeys God’s word: “Get up, go to Nineveh the great city, and proclaim to her the proclamation that I am speaking to you.” (Jonah 3:1, 2) Jonah starts out for the Assyrian capital. When he learns what day it is, he realizes that he was in the fish’s belly for three days. The prophet crosses the Euphrates River at its great western bend, travels east across northern Mesopotamia, comes to the Tigris River, and finally reaches the great city.—Jonah 3:3.

Jonah enters Nineveh, a large city. He walks on for one day and then declares: “Only forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown.” Has Jonah been miraculously endowed with knowledge of the Assyrian language? We are not told. But even if he is speaking in Hebrew and someone is interpreting, his proclamation produces results. The men of Nineveh begin to put faith in God. They proclaim a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reaches the king of Nineveh, he rises from his throne, re-

moves his official garment, covers himself with sackcloth, and sits down in the ashes. —Jonah 3:4-6.

How surprised Jonah is! The Assyrian king sends out heralds with the cry: "No man and no domestic animal, no herd and no flock, should taste anything at all. None should take food. Even water they should not drink. And let them cover themselves with sackcloth, man and domestic animal; and let them call out to God with



strength and come back, each one from his bad way and from the violence that was in their hands. Who is there knowing whether the true God may turn back and actually feel regret and turn back from his burning anger, so that we may not perish?" —Jonah 3:7-9.

The Ninevites comply with their king's decree. When God sees that they have turned back from their bad way, he feels regret over the calamity he has spoken of causing to them, so he does not cause it. (Jonah 3:10) Because of their repentance, hu-

mility, and faith, Jehovah decides not to inflict upon them the intended judgment.

The Pouting Prophet

Forty days pass and nothing happens to Nineveh. (Jonah 3:4) Realizing that the Ninevites will not be destroyed, Jonah is highly displeased and becomes hot with anger and prays: "Ah, now, O Jehovah, was not this an affair of mine, while I happened to be on my own ground? That is why I went ahead and ran away to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, and feeling regret over the calamity. And now, O Jehovah, take away, please, my soul from me, for my dying is better than my being alive." God responds with this question: "Have you rightly become hot with anger?" —Jonah 4:1-4.

With that, Jonah stalks out of town. Going to the east, he erects a booth so that he may sit in its shade until he sees what will become of the city. In turn, Jehovah compassionately 'appoints a bottle-gourd plant, that it should come up over Jonah, in order to become a shade over his head and deliver him from his calamitous state.' How Jonah rejoices over the bottle-gourd plant! But God arranges for a worm to strike the plant at dawn, and it starts to wilt. Soon it has completely dried up. God also sends a parching east wind. The sun is now striking the prophet upon the head, so that he is swooning away. He keeps on asking to die. Yes, Jonah repeatedly says: "My dying off is better than my being alive." —Jonah 4:5-8.

Jehovah now speaks. He asks Jonah: "Have you rightly become hot with anger over the bottle-gourd plant?" Jonah answers: "I have rightly become hot with anger, to the point of death." In essence, Jehovah now tells the prophet: 'You felt sorry for the bottle-gourd plant. But you did not

toil upon it or make it grow big. It came and perished as a mere growth of a night.' God further reasoned: 'For my part, should I not feel sorry for the great city of Nineveh, inhabited by 120,000 men who do not know the difference between their right hand and their left, besides many domestic animals?' (Jonah 4:9-11) The right answer is obvious.

Jonah is repentant and lives to write the Bible book bearing his name. How did he learn that the sailors feared Jehovah, offered Him a sacrifice, and made vows? By divine inspiration or perhaps at the temple from one of the sailors or passengers.—Jonah 1:16; 2:4.

"The Sign of Jonah"

When scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus Christ for a sign, he said: "A wicked and adulterous generation keeps on seeking for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet." Jesus added: "For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." (Matthew 12:38-40) Jewish days began at sundown. Christ died on Friday afternoon, Nisan 14, 33 C.E. His body was placed in a tomb before sunset of that day. Nisan 15 began that evening and ran until sundown of

Saturday, the seventh and last day of the week. At that time Nisan 16 began and ran its course until sunset of what we call Sunday. Consequently, Jesus was dead and in the tomb for at least a period of time on Nisan 14, was entombed throughout the entire day of Nisan 15, and spent the nighttime hours of Nisan 16 in the tomb. When certain women came to the tomb on Sunday morning, he had already been resurrected.—Matthew 27:57-61; 28:1-7.

Jesus was in the tomb for parts of three days. His foes thus got "the sign of Jonah," but Christ said: "Men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it; because they repented at what Jonah preached, but, look! something more than Jonah is here." (Matthew 12:41) How true! The Jews had among them Jesus Christ—a prophet much greater than Jonah. Though Jonah was an adequate sign to the Ninevites, Jesus preached with far more authority and supporting proof than that prophet did. Yet, the Jews in general did not believe.—John 4:48.

As a nation the Jews did not humbly accept the Prophet greater than Jonah, and they did not exercise faith in Him. But what about their ancestors? They too lacked faith and a humble spirit. In fact, Jonah's preaching activity in Nineveh showed up the contrast between the repentant Ninevites and the stiff-necked Israelites, who were sorely lacking in faith and humility.—Compare Deuteronomy 9:6, 13.

What about Jonah himself? He learned how great God's mercy is. Moreover, Jehovah's reaction to Jonah's murmuring about the pity shown the repentant Ninevites should keep us from complaining when our heavenly Father extends mercy to people in our day. Indeed, let us rejoice that each year thousands turn to Jehovah in faith and with humble hearts.

In Our Next Issue

When Prejudice Will Be No More!

The Serpent's Seed—How Exposed?

**Flight to Safety
Before the Great Tribulation**

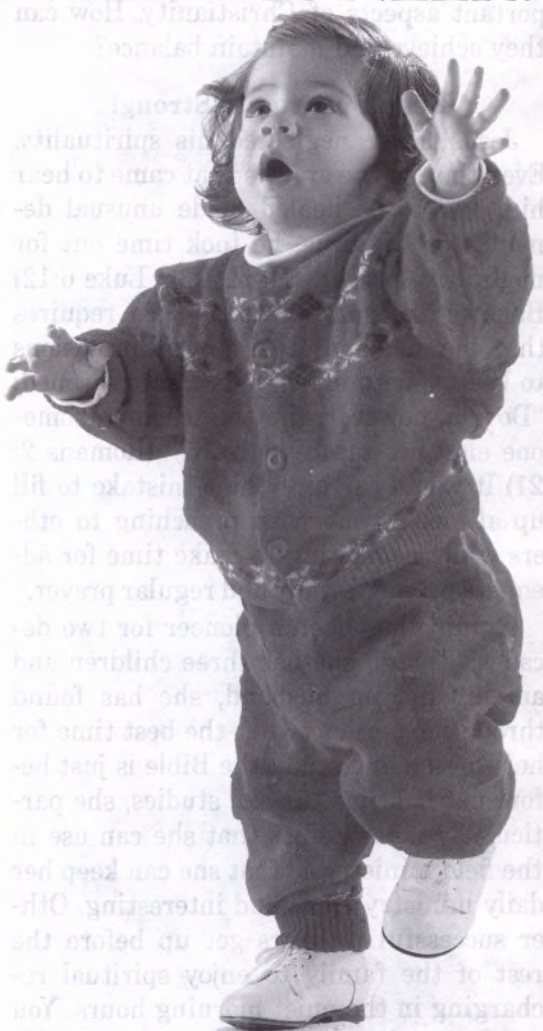
ARE YOU A BALANCED PIONEER?

THE father's eyes beam as he waits with open arms for his daughter to take her first halting steps. When she suddenly topples, he encourages her to try again. He knows that she will soon gain her balance and strength.

In a similar way, a new pioneer minister may need time and encouragement before he or she attains the balance needed to succeed as a full-time Kingdom proclaimer. Many pioneers continue serving joyfully for decades. A few are thrown off balance by unexpected changes in their circumstances. Some even lose their joy. In one country, 20 percent of those who start pioneering stop within the first two years of their full-time service. What might take a pioneer out of this most joyful service? Can anything be done to avoid these setbacks?

Although poor health, financial needs, and family responsibilities may cause some to leave the full-time ministry, a stumbling block for others has been the failure to maintain good balance between various Christian obligations. Balance implies “a state in which no one part, element, factor, or influence overweights another or is out of due proportion to the others.”

Jesus Christ showed his disciples how the work of preaching and disciple making was to be done. In his own ministry, he also illustrated how balance is maintained. Jesus showed that the Jewish religious leaders lacked balance, telling them: “You give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cumin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness. These



things it was binding to do, yet not to disregard the other things.”—Matthew 23:23.

This principle applies equally well today, especially to the pioneer ministry. Impelled by enthusiasm and good intent, some have taken up pioneering without fully preparing for it or considering all that it involves. (Luke 14:27, 28) Others

have become so absorbed in the field ministry that they have overlooked other important aspects of Christianity. How can they achieve and maintain balance?

Keep Spiritually Strong!

Jesus never neglected his spirituality. Even though the crowds that came to hear him and to be healed made unusual demands on his time, he took time out for meditative prayer. (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12) Balanced pioneering today also requires that one make ample use of all provisions to keep spiritually strong. Paul reasoned: "Do you, however, the one teaching someone else, not teach yourself?" (Romans 2:21) It would certainly be a mistake to fill up all one's time with preaching to others while neglecting to make time for adequate personal study and regular prayer.

Kumiko has been a pioneer for two decades. Though she has three children and an unbelieving husband, she has found through experience that the best time for her to read and study the Bible is just before her bedtime. As she studies, she particularly notes points that she can use in the field ministry so that she can keep her daily ministry fresh and interesting. Other successful pioneers get up before the rest of the family to enjoy spiritual recharging in the quiet morning hours. You may have other appropriate times set aside to prepare for meetings and keep up with the latest Christian publications. If you desire to maintain the joy of the ministry, personal study is not something that can be rushed or neglected.

Balancing Family Responsibilities

Pioneering parents also need to keep in mind that a large part of "the will of Je-

hovah" for them involves caring for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of their own family. (Ephesians 5:17; 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:8) Sometimes even a believing mate and family members fear that they will not receive comfort and support from the wife and mother once she starts pioneering. Such feelings result in a less-than-enthusiastic response to her desire to become a pioneer. With good planning and forethought, however, balance can be maintained.

Many pioneers endeavor to do all of their preaching work when family members are away from home. Kumiko, mentioned earlier, is with her family as they eat their breakfast, sees her husband and children off in the morning, and is back home before they return. She uses Mondays to cook several meals in advance so that she can be relaxed and can eat meals with her family instead of busying herself in the kitchen. Doing more than one chore at a time, such as other housework while preparing meals, also helps. In that way Kumiko even finds time to invite her children's friends over and to prepare special treats for them.

As children grow into their teenage years, they often need more attention from their parents in coping with the new emotions, desires, doubts, and fears flooding over them. This calls for alertness and adjustment in the schedule of a parent who is a pioneer. Consider Hisako, a pioneering mother of three. What did she do when her oldest daughter began to display a lack of joy and enthusiasm for Christian meetings and field service because of the pull of worldly school friends? The real need was for her daughter to make the truth her own and become fully convinced that separate-

ness from the world was the best course.—James 4:4.

Hisako states: "I decided to study with her the basic doctrines in the *Live Forever* book again on a daily basis. At first we could only study for a few minutes, with my daughter often complaining of severe stomachaches and headaches when it was time for the study. But I had the study regularly. After a few months, her spirit greatly improved, leading in just a short time to her dedication and baptism." Now Hisako is enjoying the full-time ministry together with her daughter.

Pioneering fathers also need to be careful that they do not become so wrapped up in caring for interested ones in the field and for their congregation duties that they fail to give their growing children the strong emotional support and direction they deserve. This is not something that a man should shift to his wife. A busy Christian elder who has long been a pioneer and who also manages a small business makes time to study with each of his four children individually. (Ephesians 6:4) In addition, he prepares for the weekly meetings with his family. Balanced pioneers do not neglect their families materially or spiritually.

Economic Balance

A proper view of daily needs is another area wherein pioneers should endeavor to maintain good balance. Here again, we can learn much from Jesus' fine example and counsel. He warned against being overly anxious about material concerns. Instead, he encouraged his disciples to put the Kingdom first, promising that God would care for them as he does for the rest of his creation. (Matthew 6:25-34) By follow-

ing this good counsel, many pioneers have been able to remain in full-time service for years, and Jehovah has blessed their efforts to obtain 'bread for each day.'—Matthew 6:11.

The apostle Paul counseled fellow Christians to 'let their reasonableness become known to all men.' (Philippians 4:5) Surely, reasonableness would require that we take appropriate care of our health. Balanced pioneers make every effort to show reasonableness in their way of life and in their attitude toward material things, knowing that others observe their conduct.—Compare 1 Corinthians 4:9.

Youths who take up the pioneer service should refrain from taking undue advantage of their parents' generosity. If they are living in their parents' home, it would be a display of good balance and appreciation to share in household chores and to have a part-time job that would enable them to contribute toward the cost of running the home.—2 Thessalonians 3:10.

Balanced Pioneers a Real Blessing

You may be a pioneer who is working hard to keep proper balance. Be confident. Just as a small child needs time to learn to balance himself and walk, many mature pioneers say that it took time for them to achieve balance in caring for all their duties.

Engaging in personal study, caring for family members, and supplying their own material needs are among the areas in which pioneers strive for balance. Reports show that many pioneers fulfill their responsibilities in an outstanding way. They are truly a blessing to the community and a credit to Jehovah and his organization.

Where Do They Get Their Strength?

IF YOU take a close look at the butterfly in this photo, you will see that one of its four wings is completely useless. Yet, the butterfly continues feeding and flying. This is not an isolated case. Butterflies have been observed going about their daily activity with 70 percent of their wing surfaces missing.

Similarly, many people display a resolute spirit. Despite suffering from severe physical or emotional problems, they do not give up.—Compare 2 Corinthians 4:16.

The apostle Paul personally endured great hardships during the course of his missionary journeys. He was flogged, beaten, stoned, and imprisoned. Additionally, he suffered some form of disability, perhaps a problem with his eyes, that was a constant “thorn in the flesh” to him.—2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Galatians 4:15.

A Christian elder named David, who fought severe bouts of depression for several years, believes that Jehovah’s strength was crucial to his recovery. “Time and again, hard-won progress seemed to be slipping away,” he explains. “In the face of such discouragement, I threw myself on Jehovah, and he truly sustained me.

There were occasions when I prayed for hours at a time. When I spoke to Jehovah, my feelings of loneliness and uselessness disappeared. I have struggled through periods of great weakness, but thanks to Jehovah, out of this weakness has come strength—even the strength to help others.”

Jehovah God strengthened Paul. Therefore, he could say: “When I am weak, then I am powerful.” (2 Corinthians 12:10) Yes, Paul’s weaknesses taught him to rely on God-given strength. “For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me,” said the apostle. (Philippians 4:13) Jehovah certainly does empower his servants.

