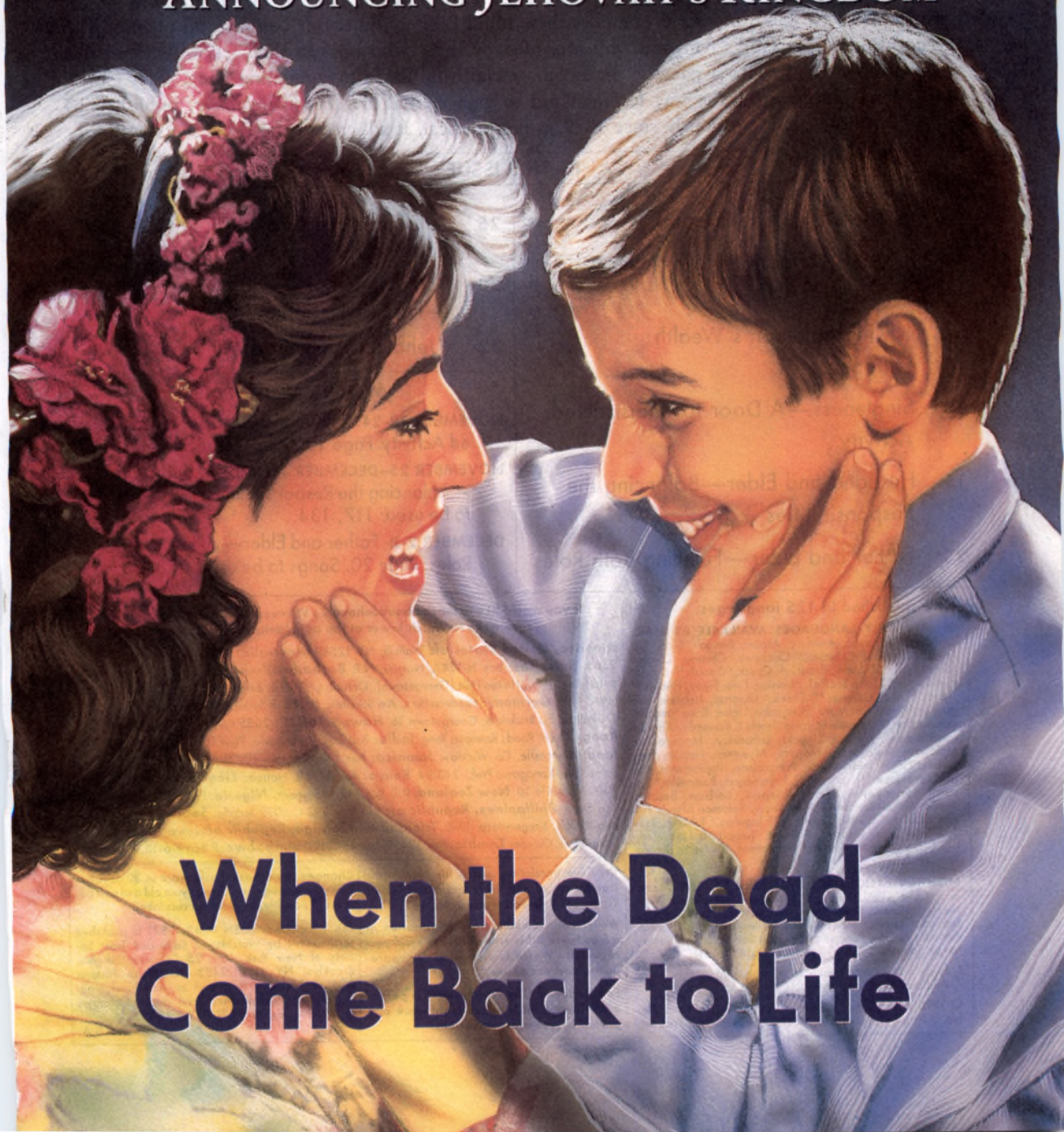


OCTOBER 15, 1996

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**When the Dead
Come Back to Life**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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Is There Life After Death?



TWO questions have perplexed mankind for millennia: Why do we have to grow old and eventually die? Is there any kind of conscious life after death?

The first has puzzled many people because even modern medical science, with all its impressive discoveries, has not been able to come up with a conclusive or satisfying answer.

The second question has had an abundance of varying answers. Generally, however, answers about whether there is conscious life after death are polarized between those who are positive that this life is not all there is and those who are equally adamant that conscious life ends at death. Most of this latter group tell us that there is no doubt in their minds that man's brief life span is all that he can expect. Often, any arguments put forward to the contrary meet with a smug, "Well, no one has ever come back to tell us, right?"

As with other controversial questions, there are many who are not yet decided—asserting that they are always open to persuasion one way or the other. But others will answer, perhaps flippantly, "We'll have to wait and see when the time comes!"

A Long-Standing Question

An early question about life after death was raised some 3,500 years ago by the well-known Oriental Job, who is renowned for his patience in the face of suffering. This is the way that Job posed his question: "Man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more. As water disappears from the sea

or a riverbed becomes parched and dry, so man lies down and does not rise . . . If a man dies, will he live again?"—Job 14:10-14, *New International Version*.

But Job was not alone in his inquiring about life after death. The *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* sets out this enlightening information under the heading "State of the Dead": "No subject connected with his psychic life has so engrossed the mind of man as that of his condition after death. [Indigenous people] in all regions of the world have generally very clear and vivid conceptions of the spirit-world—its life, its characteristics, its landscapes—and this suggests an intense preoccupation with the subject. The widespread fear of the dead points to a very primitive idea that their state was not one in which life had ended. Death had cut off energies; that was obvious enough; but were there not other energies at work, or were not those energies capable of manifestation in subtle, mysterious ways? Whether men at first believed in a spirit, soul, or ghost, separate from the body, or not, there seems every reason to believe that they regarded the dead as still carrying on some kind of existence."

You may fit into any one of the three categories mentioned above: not sure what happens after death; convinced that there is life of some sort after death; or convinced that this life is all there is. Whatever the case, we invite you to consider carefully the following article. See if you find in it convincing Biblical proof that there is a wonderful prospect of a happy life after death, how it will come about, where, and when.

Life After Death—How, Where, When?



MAN'S Creator and Life-Giver gives his personal guarantee that human death does not necessarily end life forever. Furthermore, God assures us that it is possible not only to live again for a further limited life span but to live with the prospect of never facing death again! The apostle Paul put it simply, yet confidently: "He [God] has furnished a *guarantee* to all men in that he has resurrected him [Christ Jesus] from the dead." —Acts 17:31.

Of course, this still leaves unanswered three basic questions: How can a dead person come back to life? When will this happen? Where does that new life come into existence? Throughout the world, diverse answers have been given to these questions, but a vital key to determining the truth of the matter is to understand accurately what happens to humans at the time of their death.

Is Immortality the Answer?

A widely held belief is that a part of all humans is immortal and that only their bodies die. You certainly have heard such a claim. This part that is claimed to be immortal is referred to variously as "soul" or "spirit." It is said to survive the death of the body and continue to live elsewhere. Frankly, such a belief did not originate in the Bible. True, ancient Hebrew Bible characters did look forward to life after death, but *not*

by survival of some immortal part of them. They confidently looked forward to a *future* return to life on earth through the miracle of a resurrection.

The patriarch Abraham is an outstanding example of one who had faith in a future resurrection of the dead. Describing Abraham's willingness to offer up his son Isaac in sacrifice, Hebrews 11:17-19 tells us: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, as good as offered up Isaac, . . . but he reckoned that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; and from there he did receive him also in an illustrative way," since God did not require that Isaac be sacrificed. Further testifying to the early belief among the Israelites that they would come back to life again at a later time (rather than have an immediate continuation of life in a spirit realm), the prophet Hosea wrote: "From the hand of Sheol [the common grave of mankind] I shall redeem them; from death I shall recover them." —Hosea 13:14.

So when did the idea of inherent human immortality come into Jewish thinking and belief? The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* admits that "it was probably under Greek influence that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul came into Judaism." Nevertheless, devout Jews up until the time of Christ still believed in and looked forward to a *future* resurrection. We can see this clearly from Jesus' conversation with Martha at the death of her brother Lazarus:

"Martha therefore said to Jesus: 'Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.' . . . Jesus said to her: 'Your brother will rise.' Martha said to him: 'I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.'"—John 11:21-24.

Condition of the Dead

Here again, there is no need to guess at the matter. The simple Bible truth is that the dead are "asleep," unconscious, with absolutely no feeling or knowledge. Such truth is not presented in a complex, difficult-to-comprehend manner in the Bible. Consider these easy-to-understand scriptures: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all . . . All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol, the place to which you are going." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs. His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish."—Psalm 146:3, 4.

It is understandable, then, why Jesus Christ referred to death as a sleep. The apostle John records a conversation between Jesus and his disciples: "He said to them: 'Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying there to awaken him from sleep.' Therefore the disciples said to him: 'Lord, if he has gone to rest, he will get well.' Jesus had spoken, however, about his death. But they imagined he was speaking about taking rest in sleep. At that time, therefore, Jesus said to them outspokenly: 'Lazarus has died.'"—John 11:11-14.

The Entire Person Dies

The process of human death involves the entire person, not just the death of the body.

According to clear Biblical statements, we must conclude that man does not possess an immortal soul that can survive the death of his body. The Scriptures clearly indicate that a soul can die. "Look! All the souls—to me they belong. As the soul of the father so likewise the soul of the son—to me they belong. The soul that is sinning—it itself will die." (Ezekiel 18:4) Nowhere are the words "immortal" or "immortality" spoken of as being inherent in mankind.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* supplies this interesting background on the Hebrew and Greek words rendered "soul" in the Bible: "Soul in the OT [Old Testament] is *nepeš*, in the NT [New Testament] [*psy-khe'*]. . . . *Nepeš* comes from an original root probably meaning to breathe, and thus . . . since breath distinguishes the living from the dead, *nepeš* came to mean life or self or simply individual life. . . . There is no dichotomy [division into two parts] of body and soul in the OT. The Israelite saw things concretely, in their totality, and thus he considered men as persons and not as composites. The term *nepeš*, though translated by our word soul, never means soul as distinct from the body or the individual person. . . . The term [*psy-khe'*] is the NT word corresponding with *nepeš*. It can mean the principle of life, life itself, or the living being."

You can thus see that at the time of death, the previously alive person, or the living soul, ceases to exist. The body goes back to "dust" or to the elements of the earth either gradually by burial and subsequent decay or hastened by cremation. Jehovah told Adam: "Dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) How, then, is life after death possible? It is because God has his own memory of the person who died. Jehovah has the miraculous power and ability to create humans, so it should not be

surprising that he in his memory can preserve a record of the life pattern of the individual. Yes, all prospects for that one to live again rest with God.

This is the sense of the word "spirit," which is spoken of as returning to the true God who gave it. Describing this outcome, the inspired writer of the book of Ecclesiastes explains: "Then the dust returns to the earth just as it happened to be and the spirit itself returns to the true God who gave it."—Ecclesiastes 12:7.

Only God can make someone live. When God created man in Eden and blew into his nostrils "the breath of life," in addition to filling Adam's lungs with air, Jehovah caused the life-force to vitalize all the cells in his body. (Genesis 2:7) Because this life-force can be passed on from parents to children through the process of conception and birth, a human life can properly be attributed to God though, of course, received through the parents.

Resurrection—A Happy Time

Resurrection should not be confused with reincarnation, which finds no support in the Holy Scriptures. Reincarnation is the belief that after a person dies, he is reborn in one or more successive existences. This is said to be on either a higher plane or a lower plane of existence compared to one's previous life, depending on what record was supposedly built up during that previous lifetime. According to this belief, one may be "reborn" either as a human or as an animal. That is quite in conflict with what the Bible teaches.

The word "resurrection" is translated from the Greek word *a-na'sta-sis*, which literally means "a standing up again." (Hebrew translators of the Greek have rendered *a-na'sta-sis* with the Hebrew words *techi-yath' ham-me-thim'*, meaning "reviv-

al of the dead.") Resurrection involves a reactivating of the life pattern of the individual, which life pattern God has retained in his memory. According to God's will for the individual, the person is restored in either a human body or a spirit body; yet he retains his personal identity, having the same personality and memories as when he died.

Yes, the Bible speaks of two kinds of resurrection. One is a resurrection to heaven with a spirit body; this is for a comparative few. Jesus Christ received such a resurrection. (1 Peter 3:18) And he indicated that such would be experienced by selected ones among his footstep followers, starting with the faithful apostles, to whom he gave the promise: "I am going my way to prepare a place for you. . . . I am coming again and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be." (John 14:2, 3) The Bible refers to this as "the first resurrection," first in time and in rank. The Scriptures describe those thus resurrected to heavenly life as being priests of God and as ruling as kings with Christ Jesus. (Revelation 20:6) This "first resurrection" is for a limited number, and the Scriptures themselves reveal that just 144,000 will be taken from among faithful men and women. They will have proved their integrity to Jehovah God and Christ Jesus right down to their death, having been active in bearing witness to others about their faith. —Revelation 14:1, 3, 4.

Without doubt, the resurrection of the dead is a time of boundless happiness for those resurrected to life in heaven. But the happiness does not end there, for also promised is a resurrection to life right here on earth. Those resurrected will join an unlimited number who survive the end of the present wicked system. After viewing the small number who qualify for a heavenly

resurrection, the apostle John was given a vision of "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." What a happy time that will be when millions, possibly billions, come back to life here on earth!—Revelation 7:9, 16, 17.

When Will It Be?

Any joy and happiness would be short-lived if the dead came back to an earth that was filled with strife, bloodshed, pollution, and violence—as is the situation today. No, the resurrection must await the setting up of "a new earth." Imagine, a planet cleansed of people and institutions that up until now seem bent on ruining the earth and spoiling its pristine beauty, to say nothing of the untold misery they have brought upon its inhabitants.—2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 11:18.

Obviously, the time for the general resurrection of mankind is still ahead. Yet the good news is that it is not a long way off. True, it must wait for the end of this present evil system of things. However, abundant evidence proves that the time for the sudden outbreak of the "great tribulation" is at hand, culminating in "the war of the great day of God the Almighty"—commonly referred to as Armageddon. (Matthew 24:3-14, 21; Revelation 16:14, 16) This will bring about the removal of all wickedness from this delightful planet, Earth. Following that will come the Thousand Year Reign of Christ Jesus, when the earth will be brought progressively into a paradise state.

The Bible reveals that during this Millennial reign, the resurrection of human dead will take place. Then will be fulfilled the promise Jesus made while on earth: "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out . . . to a resurrection."—John 5:28, 29.

Effect of Resurrection Hope

What a wonderful hope for the future is this prospect of a resurrection—a time when the dead will come back to life! How it encourages us as we face the rigors of advancing age, sickness, unexpected calamities and sorrow, and just everyday pressures and problems of life! It takes away the sting of death—not eliminating sorrow altogether but separating us from those who have no hope for the future. The apostle Paul acknowledged this comforting effect of the resurrection hope in these words: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant concerning those who are sleeping in death; that you may not sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope. For if our faith is that Jesus died and rose again, so, too, those who have fallen asleep in death through Jesus God will bring with him."—1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14.

We may already have experienced the truth of another observation made by the Oriental man Job: "Man wastes away like something rotten, like a garment eaten by moths. Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure." (Job 13:28-14:2, *New International Version*) We too are aware of the uncertainty of life and the grim reality that "time and unforeseen occurrence" can befall any one of us. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) For sure, none of us enjoy the thought of facing the process of dying. Still, the sure hope of a resurrection does help take away overwhelming fear of death.

Take heart, then! Look beyond a possible sleep in death to a coming back to life through the miracle of the resurrection. Look forward confidently to the prospect of a future life without end, and add to this the joy of knowing that such a blessed time is in the near future.

Is King Solomon's Wealth Exaggerated?

"The weight of the gold that came to Solomon in one year amounted up to six hundred and sixty-six talents."—1 Kings 10:14.

ACCORDING to that Bible verse, King Solomon acquired over 25 tons of gold in a single year! This would be valued today at \$240,000,000. It is almost twice as much gold as was mined worldwide in the year 1800. Is this possible? What does archaeological evidence show? It suggests that the Bible's record of Solomon's wealth is certainly plausible. *Biblical Archaeology Review* says:

- King Thutmose III of Egypt (second millennium B.C.E.) presented approximately 13.5 tons of gold items to the temple of Amon-Ra at Karnak—and this was just part of the gift.
- Egyptian inscriptions record gifts totaling approximately 383 tons of gold and silver offered by King Osorkon I (early first millennium B.C.E.) to the gods.

Furthermore, the volume *Classical Greece of the series Great Ages of Man* reports:

- The mines of Pangaeum in Thrace yielded more than 37 tons of gold each year for King Philip II (359-336 B.C.E.).
- When Philip's son Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.E.) captured Susa, the capital of the Persian empire, treasures amounting to well over 1,000 tons of gold were found.—*The New Encyclopædia Britannica*.

So the Bible's description of King Solomon's wealth is not farfetched. Remember, too, that Solomon was "greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth" at that time.—1 Kings 10:23.

How did Solomon use his wealth? His throne was overlaid with "refined gold," his drinking



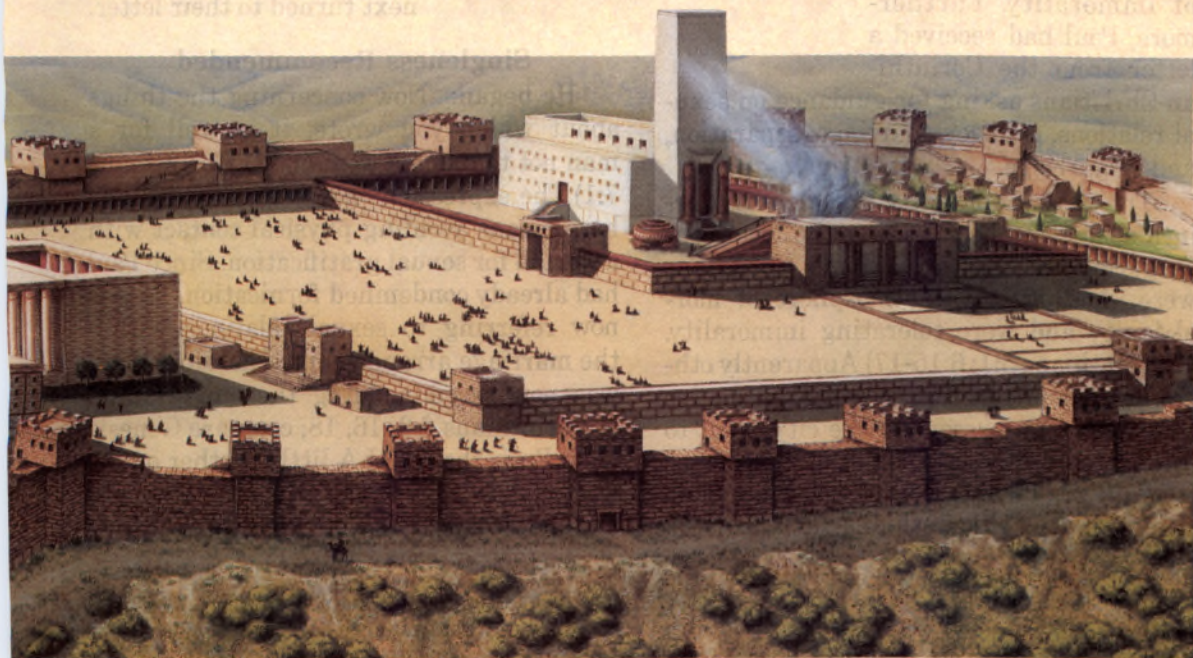
vessels were "of gold," and he possessed 200 large shields and 300 bucklers of "alloyed gold." (1 Kings 10:16-21) Above all, Solomon's gold was used in connection with Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem. The temple lampstands and sacred utensils, such as forks, bowls, pitchers, and basins, were made of gold and silver. The 15-foot-tall cherubs in the Most Holy, the altar of incense, and even the entire inside of the house were overlaid with gold.—1 Kings 6:20-22; 7:48-50; 1 Chronicles 28:17.

What about a gold-plated temple? Interestingly, such use of gold was by no means unusual in the ancient world. *Biblical Archaeology Review* notes that Amenophis III of Egypt "honored the great god Amun with a temple at Thebes that was 'plated with gold throughout, its floor adorned with silver, [and] all its portals with electrum'" —an alloy of gold and silver. Furthermore, Esarhaddon of Assyria (seventh century B.C.E.) plat-



ed the doors and coated the walls of the shrine of Ashur with gold. Regarding the temple of Sin at Harran, Nabonidus of Babylon (sixth century B.C.E.) recorded: "I clad its walls with gold and silver, and made them shine like the sun."

Thus, historical records suggest that the Biblical account of King Solomon's wealth is not exaggerated.



SINGLENES—A DOOR TO UNDISTRACTED ACTIVITY

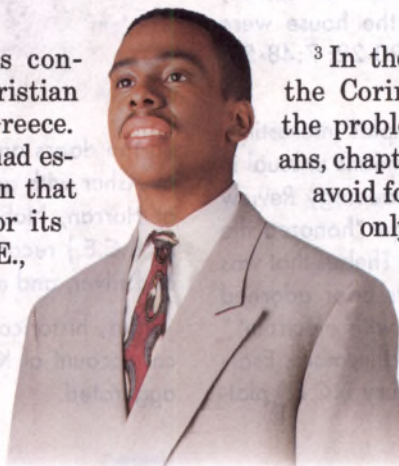
"[It] means constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction."

—1 CORINTHIANS 7:35.

THE apostle Paul was concerned about his Christian brothers in Corinth, Greece. About five years earlier, he had established the congregation in that prosperous city renowned for its immorality. Now, about 55 C.E., while in Ephesus, in Asia Minor, he received disturbing reports from Corinth of partisan divisions and the tolerating of a bad case of immorality. Furthermore, Paul had received a letter from the Corinthian Christians asking for guidance on sexual relations, celibacy, marriage, separation, and remarriage.

² The gross immorality prevalent in Corinth seemed to be affecting the local congregation in two ways. Some Christians were yielding to the atmosphere of moral laxity and were tolerating immorality. (1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:15-17) Apparently others, by way of reaction to carnal pleasures that were omnipresent in the city, went to the extreme of recommending abstinence from all sexual intercourse, even for married couples.—1 Corinthians 7:5.

1. What disturbing news reached Paul about the Christians in Corinth?
2. How was the immorality prevalent in Corinth apparently affecting the Christians in that city?



³ In the long letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he first addressed the problem of disunity. (1 Corinthians, chapters 1-4) He exhorted them to avoid following men, which can lead only to harmful schisms. They should be united as "fellow workers" of God. Then he gave them specific instructions on keeping the congregation morally clean. (Chapters 5, 6) The apostle next turned to their letter.

Singleness Recommended

⁴ He began: "Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is well for a man not to touch a woman." (1 Corinthians 7:1) The expression "not to touch a woman" here means avoiding physical contact with a woman for sexual gratification. Since Paul had already condemned fornication, he was now referring to sexual relations within the marriage arrangement. Therefore, Paul was now recommending the single state. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 16, 18; compare Genesis 20:6; Proverbs 6:29.) A little further on, he wrote: "Now I say to the unmarried persons and the widows, it is well for them that they

3. What matters did Paul initially deal with in his first letter to the Corinthians?
4. What did Paul mean when he said that "it is well for a man not to touch a woman"?

remain even as I am.” (1 Corinthians 7:8) Paul was unmarried, perhaps a widower. —1 Corinthians 9:5.

⁵ Likely the Christians in Corinth had come into contact with Greek philosophy, of which certain schools lauded extreme asceticism, or self-denial. Might that have been why the Corinthians asked Paul if it would be “well” for Christians to avoid all sexual intercourse? Paul’s answer did not reflect Greek philosophy. (Colossians 2:8) Unlike Catholic theologians, he nowhere recommended a celibate ascetic life in a monastery or convent, as if single persons were particularly holy and could contribute to their own salvation by their life-style and prayers.

⁶ Paul recommended singleness “in view of the necessity here with us.” (1 Corinthians 7:26) He might have been referring to the difficult times Christians were going through, which could be compounded by marriage. (1 Corinthians 7:28) His counsel to unmarried Christians was: “It is well for them that they remain even as I am.” To widowers, he stated: “Are you loosed from a wife? Stop seeking a wife.” Of a Christian widow, he wrote: “She is happier if she remains as she is, according to my opinion. I certainly think I also have God’s spirit.” —1 Corinthians 7:8, 27, 40.

No Compulsion to Remain Single

⁷ Jehovah’s holy spirit was undoubtedly guiding Paul when he gave this counsel. His whole presentation of celibacy and marriage shows balance and restraint. He does not make it a matter of faithfulness or unfaithfulness. It is, rather, a question of free choice, with the balance tipping in favor of

5, 6. (a) Why is it clear that Paul was not recommending a monastic life-style? (b) Why did Paul recommend singleness?

7, 8. What shows that Paul was not compelling any Christian to remain single?

singleness for those who are able to remain chaste in that state.

⁸ Immediately after stating “it is well for a man not to touch a woman,” Paul added: “Yet, because of prevalence of fornication, let each man have his own wife and each woman have her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2) After advising unmarried persons and widows to “remain even as I am,” he was quick to add: “But if they do not have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to be inflamed with passion.” (1 Corinthians 7:8, 9) Again, his counsel to widowers was: “Stop seeking a wife. But even if you did marry, you would commit no sin.” (1 Corinthians 7:27, 28) This balanced counsel reflects freedom of choice.

⁹ Paul showed that both marriage and singleness are gifts from God. “I wish all men were as I myself am. Nevertheless, each one has his own gift from God, one in this way, another in that way.” (1 Corinthians 7:7) He doubtless had in mind what Jesus said. After establishing that marriage came from God, Jesus showed that willing singleness for the sake of serving Kingdom interests is a particular gift: “Not all men make room for the saying, but only those who have the gift. For there are eunuchs that were born such from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs that were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs that have made themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of the heavens. Let him that can make room for it make room for it.”—Matthew 19:4-6, 11, 12.

Making Room for the Gift of Singleness

¹⁰ While both Jesus and Paul spoke of singleness as being a “gift,” neither said that

9. According to Jesus and Paul, how are both marriage and singleness gifts from God?

10. How can a person “make room” for the gift of singleness?

it is a miraculous gift that only some have. Jesus said that “not all men make room” for that gift, and he exhorted those who can do so to “make room for it,” which Jesus and Paul did. True, Paul wrote: “It is better to marry than to be inflamed with passion,” but he was speaking of those who “do not have self-control.” (1 Corinthians 7:9) In earlier writings, Paul showed that Christians can avoid being inflamed with passion. (Galatians 5:16, 22-24) To walk by spirit means to let Jehovah’s spirit guide our every step. Can young Christians do this? Yes, if they closely follow Jehovah’s Word. The psalmist wrote: “How will a young man [or woman] cleanse his [or her] path? By keeping on guard according to your word.”—Psalm 119:9.

¹¹ This involves guarding against permissive ideas diffused by means of many TV programs, movies, magazine articles, books, and song lyrics. Such ideas are flesh-oriented. A young Christian of either sex who wants to make room for singleness should “walk, not in accord with the flesh, but in accord with the spirit. For those who are in accord with the flesh *set their minds on the things of the flesh*, but those in accord with the spirit [*set their minds*] on the things of the spirit.” (Romans 8:4, 5) Things of the spirit are righteous, chaste, lovable, virtuous. Christians, young and old, do well to “continue considering these things.”—Philippians 4:8, 9.

¹² Making room for the gift of singleness is largely a matter of setting one’s heart on that goal and praying to Jehovah for help in pursuing it. (Philippians 4:6, 7) Paul wrote:

11. What does it mean to ‘walk in accord with the spirit’?

12. What is largely involved in making room for the gift of singleness?

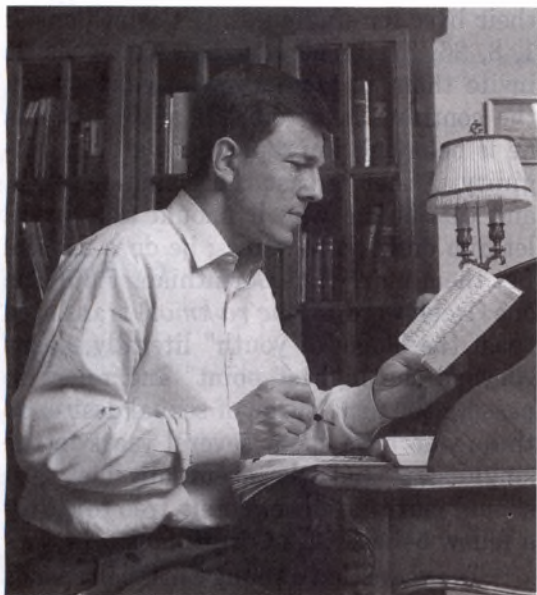
“If anyone stands settled in his heart, having no necessity, but has authority over his own will and has made this decision in his own heart, to keep his own virginity, he will do well. Consequently he also that gives his virginity in marriage does well, but he that does not give it in marriage will do better.”—1 Corinthians 7:37, 38.

Singleness With a Purpose

¹³ Singleness is not meritorious in itself. In what sense, then, can it be “better”? It all depends on how a person uses the freedom it brings. Paul wrote: “Indeed, I want you to be free from anxiety. The unmarried man is anxious for the things of the Lord, how he may gain the Lord’s approval. But the married man is anxious for the things of the world, how he may gain the approval of his wife, and he is divided. Further, the unmarried woman, and the virgin, is anxious for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in her body and in her spirit. However, the married woman is anxious for the things of the world, how she may gain the approval of her husband. But this I am saying for your personal advantage, not that I may cast a noose upon you, but to move you to that which is becoming and that which means constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction.”—1 Corinthians 7:32-35.

¹⁴ A single Christian who uses his unmarried state to pursue selfish goals is not doing “better” than married Christians. He is remaining single, not “on account of the kingdom,” but for personal reasons. (Matthew 19:12) The unmarried man or woman should be “anxious for the things of the Lord,” be anxious to “gain the Lord’s

13, 14. (a) What comparison did the apostle Paul make between unmarried and married Christians? (b) How only can a single Christian “do better” than those who are married?



approval,” and be in “constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction.” This means devoting undivided attention to serving Jehovah and Christ Jesus. Only by so doing are unmarried Christian men and women doing “better” than married Christians.

Undistracted Activity

¹⁵ Paul’s whole argument in this chapter is this: While marriage is legitimate and, under certain circumstances, advisable for some, singleness is undeniably advantageous for the Christian man or woman who wants to serve Jehovah with minimum distraction. Whereas the married person is “divided,” the unmarried Christian is free to concentrate attention on “the things of the Lord.”

¹⁶ What are the Lord’s things to which an unmarried Christian can give attention

15. What is the crux of Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians chapter 7?

16, 17. How can a single Christian better concentrate attention on “the things of the Lord”?

more freely than people who are married? In another context, Jesus spoke of “God’s things”—things that a Christian cannot give to Caesar. (Matthew 22:21) These things essentially concern a Christian’s life, worship, and ministry.—Matthew 4:10; Romans 14:8; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 3:5, 6; 4:1.

¹⁷ Single persons are generally freer to devote time to Jehovah’s service, which can benefit their spirituality and the extent of their ministry. They can spend more time on personal study and meditation. Single Christians can often fit their Bible reading into their schedule more easily than those who are married can. They may prepare better for meetings and field service. All of this is to their “personal advantage.”—1 Corinthians 7:35.

¹⁸ Many single brothers who are already serving as ministerial servants are free to say to Jehovah: “Here I am! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:8) They can apply to attend the Ministerial Training School, which is reserved for single ministerial servants and elders who are free to serve where the need is greater. Even brothers who are not free to leave their congregation can make themselves available to serve their brothers as ministerial servants or elders.—Philippians 2:20-23.

¹⁹ Single sisters, not having a human head to consult with and confide in, may be more apt to ‘throw their burdens upon Jehovah.’ (Psalm 55:22; 1 Corinthians 11:3) This is particularly important for sisters who out of love for Jehovah are single. If in time they do marry, it would be “only in the Lord,” that is, only to someone dedicated

18. How can many single brothers show that they want to serve Jehovah “without distraction”?

19. How are many single sisters blessed, and what is one way in which they can be a blessing to the congregations?

to Jehovah. (1 Corinthians 7:39) Elders are thankful to have unmarried sisters in their congregations; these often visit and help the sick and the elderly. This brings happiness to all concerned.—Acts 20:35.

²⁰ Many young Christians have arranged their affairs so as to be in “constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction.” (1 Corinthians 7:35) They are serving Jehovah as full-time pioneer ministers, missionaries, or at one of the Watch Tower Society’s branch offices. And what a happy group they are! How refreshing their presence is! Why, in Jehovah’s and Jesus’ eyes, they are “just like dewdrops.” —Psalm 110:3.

No Vow of Perpetual Celibacy

²¹ A key point in Paul’s counsel is that Christians would do “well” to make room in

20. How are many Christians showing that they are in “constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction”?

21. (a) Why is it plain that Paul did not encourage the taking of a vow of celibacy? (b) What did he imply when he spoke of being “past the bloom of youth”?

By Way of Review

- ☐ Why did the apostle Paul feel the need to write to the congregation in Corinth?
- ☐ Why do we know that Paul was not recommending a monastic life-style?
- ☐ How can a person “make room” for singleness?
- ☐ How can single sisters profit from their single state?
- ☐ In what ways can single brothers take advantage of their freedom to serve Jehovah “without distraction”?

their lives for singleness. (1 Corinthians 7: 1, 8, 26, 37) In no way, however, does he invite them to take a vow of celibacy. On the contrary, he wrote: “If anyone thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virginity, if that is past the bloom of youth, and this is the way it should take place, let him do what he wants; he does not sin. Let them marry.” (1 Corinthians 7:36) The one Greek word (*hyperakmos*) translated “past the bloom of youth” literally means “beyond the highest point” and refers to passing the peak surge of sexual desire. So those who have spent several years in the single state and who eventually feel they should marry are completely free to marry a fellow believer.—2 Corinthians 6:14.

²² The years that a young Christian spends serving Jehovah without distraction are a wise investment. They allow him or her to acquire practical wisdom, experience, and insight. (Proverbs 1:3, 4) A person who has remained single on account of the Kingdom is in a far better position later, if he so decides, to assume the responsibilities of married life and perhaps parenthood.

²³ Some Christians who have spent several years serving Jehovah full-time in the single state carefully choose their future mate with a view to continuing in some form of full-time service. This is certainly most commendable. Some might even envisage getting married with the idea of not allowing their marriage to impede their service in any way. But should a married Christian feel as free to concentrate on his service of Jehovah as when he or she was single? This question will be considered in the following articles.

22. Why is it advantageous from every standpoint for a Christian not to marry too young?

23. What might some who contemplate marriage have in mind, but what question will be considered in the following articles?

HUSBAND AND ELDER— BALANCING THE RESPONSIBILITIES

'The overseer should be a husband of one wife.'

—1 TIMOTHY 3:2.

IN THE first century, faithful Christians were concerned with balancing their various responsibilities. When the apostle Paul said that a Christian who remains single "will do better," did he mean that such a man would be better suited to serve as an overseer in the Christian congregation? Was he in fact making singleness a requirement for eldership? (1 Corinthians 7:38) Celibacy is required of the Catholic clergy. But is priestly celibacy Scriptural? The Eastern Orthodox Churches allow their parish priests to be married men, yet not their bishops. Is that in harmony with the Bible?

² Many of Christ's 12 apostles, the foundation members of the Christian congregation, were married men. (Matthew 8:14, 15; Ephesians 2:20) Paul wrote: "We have authority to lead about a sister as a wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas [Peter], do we not?" (1 Corinthians 9:5) The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* concedes that "the law of celibacy is of ecclesiastical origin" and that "ministers

1, 2. Why is priestly celibacy unscriptural?



of the N[ew] T[estament] were not obliged to celibacy." Jehovah's Witnesses follow the Scriptural pattern rather than ecclesiastical law.—1 Timothy 4:1-3.

Eldership and Marriage Are Compatible

³ Far from requiring that men appointed as overseers should be unmarried, Paul wrote to Titus: "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might correct the things that were defective

and might make appointments of older men [Greek, *presby'te-ros*] in city after city, as I gave you orders; if there is any man free from accusation, a husband of one wife, having believing children that were not under a charge of debauchery nor unruly. For an overseer [Greek, *e-pi'sko-pos*, whence the word "bishop"] must be free from accusation as God's steward."—Titus 1:5-7.

⁴ On the other hand, marriage is not a Scriptural requirement for eldership. Jesus remained single. (Ephesians 1:22) Paul,

3. What Scriptural facts show that Christian overseers can be married men?

4. (a) How do we know that marriage is not a requirement for Christian overseers? (b) What advantage does a single brother who is an elder have?

an outstanding overseer within the first-century Christian congregation, was then unmarried. (1 Corinthians 7:7-9) Today, there are many single Christians who serve as elders. Their single state probably leaves them more time to discharge their duties as overseers.

'The Married Man Is Divided'

⁵ When a Christian man marries, he should realize that he is taking on new responsibilities that will make claims on his time and attention. The Bible states: "The unmarried man is anxious for the things of the Lord, how he may gain the Lord's approval. But the married man is anxious for the things of the world, how he may gain the approval of his wife, and he is divided." (1 Corinthians 7:32-34) In what sense divided?

⁶ For one thing, a married man relinquishes authority over his own body. Paul made this quite clear: "The wife does not exercise authority over her own body, but her husband does; likewise, also, the husband does not exercise authority over his own body, but his wife does." (1 Corinthians 7:4) Some who are contemplating marriage may feel that this is of little consequence because sex will not be the big thing in their marriage. However, since premarital chastity is a Scriptural requirement, Christians do not really know the intimate needs of their future mate.

⁷ Paul shows that even a couple who 'set their minds on the things of the spirit' must consider the sexual needs of each other. He advised Christians in Corinth: "Let

5. What Scriptural fact should married brothers acknowledge?

6, 7. (a) What is one way in which a married man is "divided"? (b) What counsel does Paul give to married Christians? (c) How could this influence a man's decision to accept a work assignment?

the husband render to his wife her due; but let the wife also do likewise to her husband. Do not be depriving each other of it, except by mutual consent for an appointed time, that you may devote time to prayer and may come together again, that Satan may not keep tempting you for your lack of self-regulation." (Romans 8:5; 1 Corinthians 7:3, 5) Sadly, there have been cases of adultery when this advice was not followed. This being so, a married Christian should weigh matters carefully before accepting a work assignment that will separate him from his wife over an extended period. He no longer has the same freedom of movement as he had when he was single.

⁸ In what sense can it be said that married Christian men, including elders, are "anxious for the things of the world [*ko'-smos*]"? (1 Corinthians 7:33) It is quite evident that Paul was not speaking of the bad things of this world, which all true Christians are to shun. (2 Peter 1:4; 2:18-20; 1 John 2:15-17) God's Word instructs us "to repudiate ungodliness and worldly [*kosmi-kos*'] desires and to live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things." —Titus 2:12.

⁹ A married Christian is, therefore, "anxious for the things of the world" in that he or she is legitimately concerned about mundane things that are part of normal married life. This includes housing, food, clothing, recreation—not to speak of countless other concerns if there are children. But even for a childless couple, if the marriage is to work, both husband and wife must be anxious to "gain the approval" of his or her marriage mate. This is of particular inter-

8, 9. (a) What did Paul mean when he said that married Christians are "anxious for the things of the world"? (b) What should married Christians be anxious to do?



Even though occupied with theocratic activities, an elder should give his wife loving attention

est to Christian elders as they balance their responsibilities.

Good Husbands as Well as Good Elders

¹⁰ While marriage is not a requirement for eldership, if a Christian man is married, before he is recommended for appointment as an elder, he certainly should give evidence of endeavoring to be a good, loving husband, while exercising proper headship. (Ephesians 5:23-25, 28-31) Paul wrote: "If any man is reaching out for an office of overseer, he is desirous of a fine work. The overseer should therefore be irreprehensible, a husband of one wife." (1 Timothy 3:1, 2) It should be evident that an elder is doing his utmost to be a good husband, whether his wife is a fellow Christian or not. In fact, even people outside the congregation should be able to notice that he takes good

10. For a Christian to qualify as an elder, what should his brothers and people on the outside be able to observe?

care of his wife and his other responsibilities. Paul added: "He should also have a fine testimony from people on the outside, in order that he might not fall into reproach and a snare of the Devil."—1 Timothy 3:7.

¹¹ Of course, the phrase "a husband of one wife" rules out polygamy, but it also implies marital faithfulness. (Hebrews 13:4) Elders in particular need to be especially careful when helping sisters in the congregation. They should avoid being alone when visiting a sister who is in need of counsel and comfort. They would do well to be accompanied by another elder, a ministerial servant, or even their wife if it is a matter of just making an encouraging call.—1 Timothy 5:1, 2.

¹² Incidentally, while listing the requirements for elders and ministerial servants, the apostle Paul also had a word of counsel for the wives of those who are considered for such privileges. He wrote: "Women should likewise be serious, not slanderous, moderate in habits, faithful in all things." (1 Timothy 3:11) A Christian husband can do much to help his wife match that description.

Scriptural Duties Toward a Wife

¹³ Of course, this counsel given to the wives of elders or ministerial servants presupposes that such wives are themselves dedicated Christians. Generally, this is the

11. What does the phrase "a husband of one wife" imply, so what precaution should elders take?

12. What description should the wives of elders and ministerial servants strive to meet?

13, 14. Even if an elder's wife is not a fellow Witness, why should he stay with her and be a good husband?

case because Christians are required to marry "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) But what of a brother who was already married to an unbeliever when he dedicated his life to Jehovah, or whose wife falls from the way through no fault of his?

¹⁴ This, in itself, would not bar him from being an elder. Neither, though, would it justify his separating from his wife simply because she does not share his beliefs. Paul advised: "Are you bound to a wife? Stop seeking a release." (1 Corinthians 7:27) He further stated: "If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and yet she is agreeable to dwelling with him, let him not leave her. But if the unbelieving one proceeds to depart, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not in servitude under such circumstances, but God has called you to peace. For, wife, how do you know but that you will save your husband? Or, husband, how do you know but that you will save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:12, 15, 16) Even if his wife is not a Witness, an elder should be a good husband.

¹⁵ Whether his wife is a fellow believer or not, the Christian elder should recognize that his wife needs his loving attention. The apostle Peter wrote: "You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with them [your wives] according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one, since you are also heirs with them of the undeserved favor of life, in order for your prayers not to be hindered." (1 Peter 3:7) A husband who willfully fails to care for his wife's needs endangers his own relationship with Jehovah; it could block his approach to Jehovah as "with a cloud mass, that prayer may not pass through." (Lamentations 3:

15. What counsel does the apostle Peter give to Christian husbands, and what could the consequences be if an elder proved to be a neglectful husband?

44) This could lead to his becoming disqualified to serve as a Christian overseer.

¹⁶ As noted, the main thrust of Paul's argument is that when a man marries, he relinquishes a measure of the freedom he had as a single man that permitted him to be in "constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction." (1 Corinthians 7:35) Reports show that some married elders have not always been balanced in reasoning on Paul's inspired words. In their desire to accomplish what they feel good elders should do, they may overlook some of their husbandly duties. Some would find it difficult to refuse a congregation privilege, even if accepting it would clearly be to the spiritual detriment of their wives. They enjoy the privileges that go with marriage, but are they willing to fulfill the responsibilities that go with it?

¹⁷ Certainly, zeal as an elder is commendable. Still, is a Christian balanced if, in discharging his duties in the congregation, he disregards his Scriptural responsibilities toward his wife? While desiring to support those in the congregation, a balanced elder will also be concerned about his wife's spirituality. Some elders' wives have become spiritually weak, and some have experienced spiritual "shipwreck." (1 Timothy 1:19) While a wife is responsible for working out her own salvation, in some cases the spiritual problem could have been avoided if the elder had 'fed and cherished' his wife, "as the Christ also does the congregation." (Ephesians 5:28, 29) To be sure, elders must 'pay attention to themselves and to *all the flock*.' (Acts 20:28) If they are married, this includes their wives.

16. What key point does Paul make, and how should elders feel about this?

17. What has happened to some wives, and how might this have been avoided?

'Tribulation in the Flesh'

¹⁸ The apostle also wrote: "If a virgin person married, such one would commit no sin. However, those who do will have tribulation in their flesh. But I am sparing you." (1 Corinthians 7:28) Paul desired to spare those able to follow his example of singleness from the cares that inevitably come with marriage. Even for childless couples, these cares may include health problems or financial difficulties as well as Scriptural responsibilities toward the aged parents of one's mate. (1 Timothy 5:4, 8) An elder must, in an exemplary way, face up to these responsibilities, and this may at times affect his activities as a Christian overseer. Happily, most elders are doing a fine job in meeting both family and congregation responsibilities.

¹⁹ Paul added: "The time left is reduced. Henceforth let those who have wives be as though they had none." (1 Corinthians 7:29) Of course, in view of what he had al-

18. What are some aspects of the "tribulation" that married Christians experience, and how could this affect an elder's activities?

19. What did Paul mean when he said: "Let those who have wives be as though they had none"?

By Way of Review

- ☐ What Scriptural facts show that a Christian overseer can be a married man?
- ☐ If a single elder gets married, of what should he be conscious?
- ☐ In what ways is a married Christian "anxious for the things of the world"?
- ☐ How do many wives of overseers show a fine spirit of self-sacrifice?

ready written in this chapter to the Corinthians, it is obvious that he did not mean that married Christians should in some way neglect their wives. (1 Corinthians 7:2, 3, 33) He showed what he meant, when he wrote: "[Let] those making use of the world [be] as those not using it to the full; for the scene of this world is changing." (1 Corinthians 7:31) Even more so now than in Paul's day or in the apostle John's day, "the world is passing away." (1 John 2:15-17) Therefore, married Christians who sense the need to make some sacrifices in following Christ cannot be exclusively absorbed in the joys and privileges of matrimony. —1 Corinthians 7:5.

Self-Sacrificing Wives

²⁰ Just as elders make sacrifices so as to benefit others, many wives of elders have striven to balance their responsibilities in marriage with vital Kingdom interests. Thousands of Christian women are happy to cooperate to enable their husbands to carry out their duties as overseers. Jehovah loves them for this, and he blesses the fine spirit they show. (Philemon 25) Nevertheless, Paul's balanced counsel shows that wives of overseers can legitimately expect a reasonable amount of time and attention from their husbands. It is the Scriptural duty of married elders to devote adequate time to their wives so as to balance their responsibilities as husband and overseer.

²¹ But what if in addition to being a husband, a Christian elder is a father? This compounds his responsibilities and opens up an additional field of oversight, as we shall see in the following article.

20, 21. (a) What sacrifices are many Christian wives willing to make? (b) What can a wife legitimately expect of her husband, even if he is an elder?

FATHER AND ELDER —FULFILLING BOTH ROLES

"If indeed any man does not know how to preside over his own household, how will he take care of God's congregation?"

—1 TIMOTHY 3:5.

OVERSEERS in the early Christian congregation could be single men or married men without children or family men with children. Doubtless some of those Christians were able to follow the apostle Paul's advice given in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 7, remaining single. Jesus had stated: "There are eunuchs that have made themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of the heavens." (Matthew 19:12) Such single men, like Paul and perhaps some of his traveling companions, would be free to travel to help their brothers.

² The Bible does not say whether Barnabas, Mark, Silas, Luke, Timothy, and Titus were single men. If married, evidently they were sufficiently free from family responsibilities to be able to travel widely on various assignments. (Acts 13:2; 15:39-41; 2 Corinthians 8:16, 17; 2 Timothy 4:9-11; Titus 1:5) They could have been accompanied by

1, 2. (a) In the first century, how were single overseers and married overseers without children able to serve their brothers? (b) How are Aquila and Priscilla an example for many married couples today?



their wives, like Peter and "the rest of the apostles," who apparently took their wives with them when going from place to place. (1 Corinthians 9:5) Aquila and Priscilla are an example of a married couple who were willing to pull up stakes, following Paul from Corinth to Ephesus, then moving to Rome, and back again to Ephesus. The Bible does not say if they had

any children. Their devoted service for their brothers earned them the gratitude of "all the congregations of the nations." (Romans 16:3-5; Acts 18:2, 18; 2 Timothy 4:19) Today, there are doubtless many married couples who, like Aquila and Priscilla, could serve other congregations, perhaps by moving where the need is greater.

Father and Elder

³ It would appear that in the first century C.E., the majority of Christian elders were married men with children. When Paul set out the qualifications required of a man "reaching out for an office of overseer," he stated that such a Christian should be "a

3. What suggests that many first-century elders were married men with families?

man presiding over his own household in a fine manner, having children in subjection with all seriousness.”—1 Timothy 3:1, 4.

⁴ As we have seen, an overseer was not obliged to have children, or even be married. But if married, to qualify as an elder or a ministerial servant, a Christian had to exercise proper and loving headship over his wife and show himself capable of keeping his children in proper submission. (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 3:12, 13) Any serious weakness in managing his household would disqualify a brother for special privileges in the congregation. Why? Paul explains: “If indeed any man does not know how to preside over his own household, how will he take care of God’s congregation?” (1 Timothy 3:5) If those of his own flesh were unwilling to submit to his oversight, how would others react?

“Having Believing Children”

⁵ When instructing Titus to appoint overseers in the Cretan congregations, Paul stipulated: “If there is any man free from accusation, a husband of one wife, having believing children that were not under a charge of debauchery nor unruly. For an overseer must be free from accusation as God’s steward.” Just what is meant by the requirement “having believing children”? —Titus 1:6, 7.

⁶ The term “believing children” refers to youngsters who have already dedicated their lives to Jehovah and have been baptized or to young ones who are progressing toward dedication and baptism. The members of a congregation expect elders’ children to be generally well-behaved

4. What was required of married elders with children?

5, 6. (a) What requirement as to children did Paul mention to Titus? (b) What is expected of elders who have children?

and obedient. It should be apparent that an elder is doing all that he can to build up faith in his children. King Solomon wrote: “Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it.” (Proverbs 22:6) But what if a youth who has received such training refuses to serve Jehovah or even commits a gross wrong?

⁷ It is evident that the above-quoted proverb is not stating a hard-and-fast rule. It does not annul the principle of free will. (Deuteronomy 30:15, 16, 19) When a son or a daughter reaches the age of responsibility, he or she must make a personal decision with regard to dedication and baptism. If an elder has clearly given needed spiritual help, guidance, and discipline, yet the youth does not choose to serve Jehovah, the father is not automatically disqualified from serving as an overseer. On the other hand, if an elder has several minor children living at home who, one after the other, become spiritually sick and get into trouble, he might no longer be considered to be “a man presiding over his own household in a fine manner.” (1 Timothy 3:4) The point is, it should be manifest that an overseer is doing his best to have ‘believing children that are not under a charge of debauchery nor unruly.’*

Married to an “Unbelieving Wife”

⁸ Concerning Christian men married to unbelievers, Paul wrote: “If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and yet she is agreeable to dwelling with him, let him not leave her

* See *The Watchtower*, February 1, 1978, pages 31-2.

7. (a) Why is it evident that Proverbs 22:6 does not express an inflexible rule? (b) If an elder’s child does not choose to serve Jehovah, why will the elder not automatically lose his privileges?

8. How should an elder act toward his unbelieving wife?

... For ... the unbelieving wife is sanctified in relation to the brother; otherwise, your children would really be unclean, but now they are holy. For, ... husband, how do you know but that you will save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:12-14, 16) The word "unbelieving" here does not refer to a wife who has no religious beliefs but to one who is not dedicated to Jehovah. She could have been a Jew, or a believer in pagan gods. Today, an elder might be married to a woman who practices a different religion, is an agnostic, or even an atheist. If she is willing to stay with him, he should not leave her simply because of differing beliefs. He should still 'dwell with her according to knowledge, assigning her honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one,' living in hopes of saving her. —1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19.

⁹ If an overseer has children, he will exercise proper husbandly and fatherly headship in raising them "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) In many lands the law gives both marriage mates the right to provide religious instruction for their children. In this case the wife may demand to exercise her right to expose the children to her religious beliefs and practices, which may include taking them to her church.* Of course, the children should follow their Bible-trained conscience with regard to not participating in false religious ceremonies. As family head, the father will exercise his own right to study with his children and take them to meetings at the Kingdom Hall when possible. When they reach the age at which they may make their own decisions, they will decide for themselves

* See *The Watchtower*, December 1, 1960, pages 735-6.

9. In lands where the law gives both husband and wife the right to expose their children to their respective religious beliefs, how should an elder act, and how will this affect his privileges?

which way they will go. (Joshua 24:15) If his fellow elders and the members of the congregation can see that he is doing all that the law allows him to do to instruct his children properly in the way of the truth, he will not be disqualified as an overseer.

'Presiding Over His Household in a Fine Manner'

¹⁰ Even for an elder who is a father and whose wife is a fellow Christian, it is no easy task to apportion his time and attention properly between his wife, children, and congregation responsibilities. The Scriptures are quite clear that a Christian father has an obligation to take care of his wife and children. Paul wrote: "Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith." (1 Timothy 5:8) In that same letter, Paul stated that only married men who have already shown themselves to be good husbands and fathers should be recommended to serve as overseers.—1 Timothy 3:1-5.

¹¹ An elder should "provide" for his own not only materially but also spiritually and emotionally. Wise King Solomon wrote: "Prepare your work out of doors, and make it ready for yourself in the field. Afterward you must also build up your household." (Proverbs 24:27) So while providing for the material, emotional, and recreational needs of his wife and children, an overseer should also build them up spiritually. This takes time—time that he will not be able to devote to congregation matters. But it is time that can pay rich dividends

10. If a family man is an elder, where does his primary duty lie?

11. (a) In what ways should an elder "provide for those who are his own"? (b) How can this help an elder to meet his congregation responsibilities?

in terms of family happiness and spirituality. In the long run, if his family is spiritually strong, the elder may need to spend less time handling family problems. This will leave his mind freer to take care of congregation matters. His example as a good husband and a good father will be of spiritual benefit to the congregation.—1 Peter 5:1-3.

¹² Presiding over a household in a fine manner includes scheduling time to preside over a family study. It is particularly important that elders set a good example in this respect, for strong families make strong congregations. An overseer's time should not regularly be so occupied with other privileges of service that he has no time to study with his wife and children. If this has been the case, he should reexamine his schedule. He may have to reschedule or reduce the time he devotes to other matters, even declining certain privileges on occasion.

Balanced Oversight

¹³ Counsel to balance family and congregation responsibilities is not new. For years "the faithful and discreet slave" has been giving counsel to elders along these lines. (Matthew 24:45) Over 37 years ago, *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1959, pages 553 and 554, advised: "Really, does it not come down to a matter of balancing all these demands on our time? In this balance let proper weight be given to the interests of your own family. Certainly Jehovah God

12. In what family matter should fathers who are elders set a fine example?

13, 14. What counsel has "the faithful and discreet slave" given to elders who are family men?



Strong families make strong congregations

would not expect a man to use all his time in congregation activity, in helping his brothers and neighbors gain salvation, and yet not look after the salvation of his own household. A man's wife and children are a primary responsibility."

¹⁴ *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1986, page 22, counseled: "Engaging in the field ministry as a family will draw you closer, yet the unique needs of children require a commitment of your private time and emotional energy. Therefore, balance is needed to determine how much time you can use for . . . congregation duties while you also care spiritually, emotionally, and materially for 'those who are your own.' [A Christian] must 'learn first to practice godly devotion in [his] own household.' (1 Timothy 5:4, 8)"

¹⁵ A Scriptural proverb states: "By wisdom a household will be built up, and by discernment it will prove firmly established." (Proverbs 24:3) Yes, for an overseer to fulfill his theocratic duties and at the same time build up his household, he most certainly needs wisdom and discernment. Scripturally, he has more than one field of oversight. His family and his congregation responsibilities are involved. He needs discernment to

15. Why does an elder with a wife and children need wisdom and discernment?

strike a balance between these. (Philippians 1:9, 10) He needs wisdom to set his priorities. (Proverbs 2:10, 11) However much he feels responsible to care for his congregation privileges, he should realize that as a husband and father, his primary God-given responsibility is the care and salvation of his family.

Good Fathers as Well as Good Elders

¹⁶ An elder who has well-behaved children can be a real asset. If he has learned to take good care of his family, he is in a position to help other families in the congregation. He understands their problems better and can give counsel that reflects his own experience. Happily, thousands of elders throughout the world are doing a fine job as husbands, fathers, and overseers.

¹⁷ For a family man to be an elder, he must be a mature Christian who, while caring for his wife and children, can organize his affairs so as to be able to devote time

16. What advantage does an elder have if he is also a father?

17. (a) What should a man who is both father and elder never forget? (b) How should other members of the congregation show empathy?

By Way of Review

- ☐ How do we know that many elders in the first century C.E. were family men?
- ☐ What is required of married elders with children, and why?
- ☐ What is meant by having "believing children," but what if an elder's child does not choose to serve Jehovah?
- ☐ In what respects should an elder "provide for those who are his own"?

and attention to others in the congregation. He should never forget that his shepherding work begins at home. Knowing that elders with a wife and children have the responsibility of both their family and their congregation duties, members of the congregation will try not to make undue demands on their time. For instance, an elder who has children who have to go to school the next morning may not always be able to stay for some time after evening meetings. Other members of the congregation should understand this and show fellow feeling.—Philippians 4:5.

Our Elders Should Be Dear to Us

¹⁸ Our examination of chapter 7 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians has enabled us to see that, following Paul's advice, there are many single men who are using their freedom to serve Kingdom interests. There are also thousands of married brothers without children who, while giving due attention to their wives, serve as fine overseers in districts, circuits, congregations, and Watch Tower branches, with the commendable cooperation of their wives. Finally, in the nearly 80,000 congregations of Jehovah's people, there are many fathers who not only take loving care of their wives and children but also take time to serve their brothers as caring shepherds.—Acts 20:28.

¹⁹ The apostle Paul wrote: "Let the older men who preside in a fine way be reckoned worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard in speaking and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17) Yes, elders who preside in a fine way in their homes and in the congregation deserve our love and respect. We should indeed "keep holding men of that sort dear."—Philippians 2:29.

18, 19. (a) What has our examination of 1 Corinthians chapter 7 enabled us to realize? (b) How should we consider such Christian men?



A CLIMATE FOR GROWTH IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA



LUSH growth is the first impression a traveler gets when his plane touches down at Equatorial Guinea's international airport. The runway is surrounded by majestic trees, which dwarf the airport buildings. Luxuriant vegetation flourishes from seashore to mountaintops, stimulated by the abundant rainfall and year-round temperature in the mid-80's.

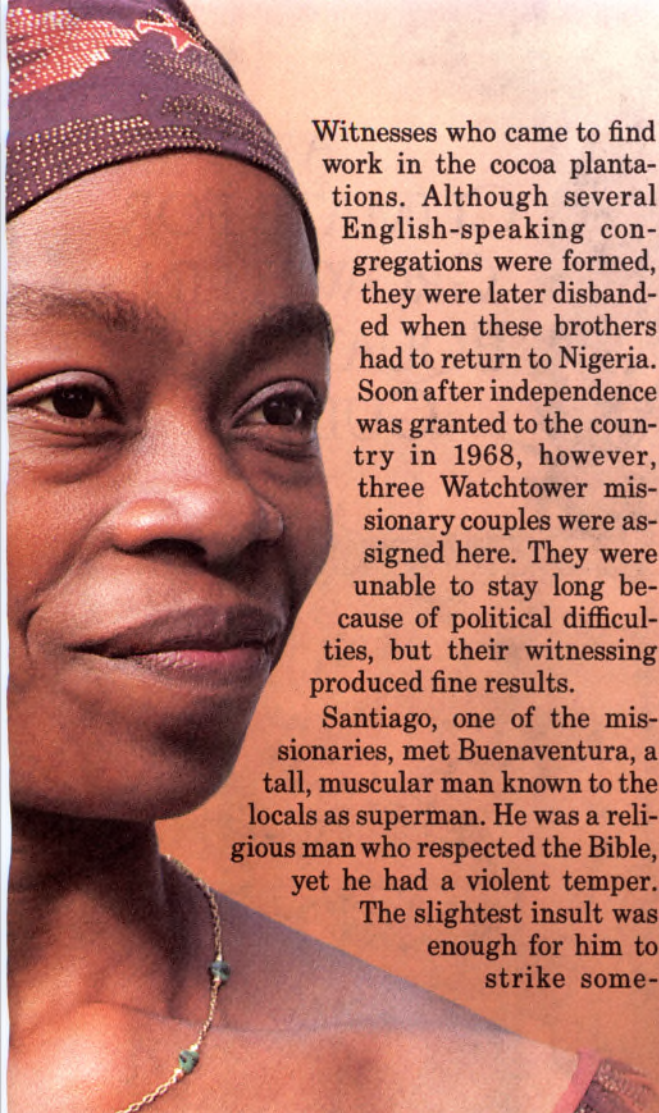
Vigorous growth of another kind is also taking place in Equatorial Guinea, "the growth that God gives." (Colossians 2:19) Like the Ethiopian official who sought help from Philip, many here are anxious to understand the Scriptures. (Acts 8:26-39) It is



not unusual for someone to approach one of Jehovah's Witnesses in the street and ask for a Bible study. The approximately 325 Witnesses in Equatorial Guinea are conducting over a thousand Bible studies.

Sowing Seed in the Early Days

Equatorial Guinea, the smallest country in Africa, is located to the south of Nigeria and Cameroon. (See map.) The good news was first brought here by Nigerian



Witnesses who came to find work in the cocoa plantations. Although several English-speaking congregations were formed, they were later disbanded when these brothers had to return to Nigeria. Soon after independence was granted to the country in 1968, however, three Watchtower missionary couples were assigned here. They were unable to stay long because of political difficulties, but their witnessing produced fine results.

Santiago, one of the missionaries, met Buenaventura, a tall, muscular man known to the locals as superman. He was a religious man who respected the Bible, yet he had a violent temper.

The slightest insult was enough for him to strike some-

one. When he got angry in a bar, all present scattered, even climbing out windows to escape his blows. In fact, as he listened to Santiago, he intended on roughing him up if he could not provide convincing Scriptural proof for what he said. 'No one is going to fool superman,' he told himself. He was fascinated by what he heard, especially about the hope of everlasting life on a paradise earth, so he agreed to a Bible study.

As the study progressed, Buenaventura's desire to live forever in Paradise became stronger, and he learned that he would have to conform his life to God's standards in order to gain such a prize. Realizing that true Christians must not "return evil for evil," he began making an earnest effort to control his temper.—Romans 12:17.

The real test came one day when he accidentally knocked over the glass of a customer in a bar. The man got angry and struck him. Instantly, others in the bar scattered, expecting a brawl to break out. But Buenaventura meekly paid for the broken glass, bought the man another drink, and apologized for his clumsiness. When the neighbors saw that a study of the Bible had made such changes in him, several were willing to study with him. By the time Buenaventura got baptized, he was already conducting five Bible studies. He has served as an elder for the last five years, and although people still call him superman, now they do so jokingly.

"Conscious of Their Spiritual Need"

During the 1970's the few local Witnesses continued preaching and meeting togeth-



er as best they could. Later, several Spanish missionary couples came to help. Andrés Bottella, who has served in Equatorial Guinea for 12 years, recalls that soon after he arrived, he was impressed by how the people were truly "conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) "It has been a real pleasure to study the Bible with such appreciative people," he says.

Mary, a Spanish sister, was studying the Bible with a young woman named María who mentioned that her parents, Francisco and Fausta, were also interested in studying. Since Mary was conducting 15 studies and María's parents lived some distance away, several weeks went by before she was able to visit them.

When Mary and her husband, Serafin, finally met the parents, they already had the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth** and a Bible, and they were eager to start studying. So they began right away. Serafin noticed that María's parents were very familiar with the material. The same happened on the second call when they covered the second chapter. "It was almost like studying with two baptized Witnesses," Serafin recalls. On the third visit, since they seemed to know the material so well, Serafin suggested a question-and-answer session to determine just how much they really understood. He discovered that Francisco and Fausta had studied the entire book by themselves!

How had their newfound knowledge affected them? In harmony with what they had learned, they had already stopped attending spiritistic meetings and had severed ties with the Catholic Church. Furthermore, Francisco had quit smoking, and they no longer ate meat that had not been prop-

erly bled. Since they had evidently applied everything they had learned, they were encouraged to begin sharing their knowledge with others. Right away they started preaching to their neighbors. In just three months, they qualified for baptism. Francisco is now a ministerial servant, and thanks to their fine example and zeal in preaching, three of their daughters are now Witnesses, two sons attend meetings, and six other relatives are studying.

Not long after he was baptized, Francisco met Pablo, a devout Catholic who served as sacristan in his church. Pablo used to deliver the sermon whenever the priest was absent. If a church member was sick, he visited; if someone was missing from church, Pablo called to give encouragement; and if someone died, he did what he could to console the family. Understandably, Pablo was much loved by all the parishioners.

Since Pablo had deep respect for the Bible, he readily accepted Francisco's offer to study with him. Quickly Pablo saw how reasonable the Bible's message was, and after a few studies, he decided to use some of the scriptures he had learned on one of his "shepherding calls" on a sick church member. Shortly thereafter, in one of his Sunday sermons, Pablo explained the importance of using God's name, Jehovah, and why we should not use images.

As he accepted the truth so readily, he expected that other members of his church would respond likewise. But after three or four of these Bible-based sermons, Pablo noticed that the people were unhappy with the information he was presenting. So he decided to abandon the church and to associate regularly with Jehovah's Witnesses. In a few months, he qualified for baptism, and he is now a zealous preacher of the good news. Although unable to preach full-time, he is currently conducting ten Bible studies.

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

Promoting Growth by Gathering Together

The Witnesses in Equatorial Guinea take seriously the Bible's injunction not to forsake gathering together. (Hebrews 10:25) Since 1994 when the work was again given official recognition by the government, the brothers have been eager to obtain suitable Kingdom Halls. In fact, most of the congregations have constructed their own halls or are in the process of doing so.

In Mongomo, where attendance at the Sunday meetings often runs as high as two and a half times the number of Kingdom publishers, the congregation has been working hard to construct a large meeting place. Other religions in Mongomo usually hire workers to build their churches, so the activity of the local Witnesses did not go unnoticed. One day the pastor of the *Iglesia Nueva Apostólica* (New Apostolic Church) stopped by to ask one of the elders how much he was paying these hardworking laborers. The pastor said that even though he had employed some bricklayers who were members of his own church, the work was proceeding very slowly. He wondered whether he could hire the workers who were building the Kingdom Hall. When he was told that all the Witnesses were working for free, he walked away flabbergasted.

Attending meetings may require considerable sacrifice for those who live far from the Kingdom Hall. Juan, a young man who got baptized in 1994, faced this situation. He heard about the truth in Gabon, where he studied the first half of the *Live Forever* book. Then he returned to Equatorial Guinea, to his native village about 65 miles from Mongomo. This presented a challenge for him to continue his study. But he was not deterred. Every month, he made an eight-hour journey by bicycle to Mongomo, where Santiago, one of the local elders, conducted a

study with him. He stayed in Mongomo for a few days and studied three or four times during the stay. In this way he was able to complete his study and qualify for baptism.

How does Juan keep spiritually strong with so little association with other Christians? Above all, by being a zealous preacher of the good news. He has preached to all the people in his village, and by the time he got baptized, he was conducting 13 Bible studies. Six of his students accompanied him to the special assembly day in Mongomo to witness his baptism. He now holds a regular *Watchtower* Study with the interested ones in his area, and usually about 20 are in attendance.

Watering the Seed Patiently

Not all spiritual growth is rapid. Sometimes a lot of patience is required to see the seed finally bear fruit. This was true in the case of Paca, who first heard the good news back in 1984 when Edita, a pioneer sister, witnessed to her in the market. When Edita visited Paca in her home the following week, Paca agreed to a Bible study. Though she was not making much progress, Edita persisted because she discerned good qualities in Paca. "She seemed to be a sheeplike person," explains Edita, "and I prayed to Jehovah that he would open her heart."

Paca continued her study on and off for four and a half years but still with very little progress. So when they completed the *Live Forever* book, Edita had a frank talk with Paca about the importance of taking the truth seriously. In her endeavor to reach Paca's heart, Edita even gave way to tears.

"That heartfelt counsel really touched me," remembers Paca. "From then on I began to make changes in my life. I enrolled in the Theocratic Ministry School, and that same year I became an unbaptized publisher. The day I finally got baptized was the

happiest day of my life!" Paca's present enthusiasm belies her former apathy. She is currently conducting 13 Bible studies, and of course she is patient with those who do not make rapid advancement.

Helping People Improve Their Lives

By living according to Bible standards, Jehovah's Witnesses in Equatorial Guinea have earned a reputation for honesty and decency. One man, who had obviously been impressed with their conduct, approached an elder of the Bata Congregation and asked: "Do you have a *Reasoning* book?*" I am fed up with being a worldly person. I would like to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses!"

Antonio, a ministerial servant in the Malabo Congregation, is a typical example of a worldly person who became a Witness. Before he studied the Bible, he led a dissolute life. He spent most of the money he earned as a watch repairer on drink, and he also lived immorally. What helped him to change his life-style? He was deeply impressed by what is forcefully stated at 1 Corinthians 6: 9, 10: "Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, . . . nor drunkards, . . . will inherit God's kingdom." He realized that to have God's favor, he must change his way of life. To that end he began to watch his association. (Proverbs 13:20) When former friends called to invite him to go drinking, he declined their invitation and instead gave them a witness. Before long they stopped pestering him.

Was it worth all the effort? "I am very happy to have changed my way of life," Antonio explains. "My health is much better even though I am now in my 60's, whereas my former friends have either died or are suffering from poor health. Now I have true friends rather than those who merely want

a companion who is willing to pay for their next drink. Most important of all, I have a good relationship with God. I am now serving as a regular pioneer, and I have a Bible study with a man who also has a drinking problem, so I can use my experience to help him."

Becoming Slaves of God

Some 200 years ago, people from along the coast of Equatorial Guinea were rounded up and shipped to the Americas as slaves. Today, many are voluntarily becoming slaves—slaves of God. This form of slavery has brought them true freedom, setting them free from Babylonish doctrines and spiritistic practices. It has also taught them how to live satisfying and productive lives. They have come to experience what Jesus promised: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—John 8:32.

With 1,937 attending the 1995 Memorial celebration—nearly six times the number of publishers in the country—there are excellent prospects for further spiritual growth. As the Witnesses in Equatorial Guinea zealously keep on planting and watering the seed of truth, they are sure that 'God will keep making it grow.' (1 Corinthians 3:6) Without a doubt, there is an ideal climate for spiritual growth in Equatorial Guinea!

In Our Next Issue

Comfort for the Oppressed

Freedom of Religion Upheld in Japan

Why Give to Jehovah?

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

The "HOUSE of DAVID"



Fact or Fiction?

DAVID—the young shepherd lad who became a musician, a poet, a soldier, a prophet, and a king—stands out in the Bible in great prominence. His name is mentioned 1,138 times; the expression “House of David”—often referring to the dynasty of David—is used 25 times. (1 Samuel 20:16) Were King David and his dynasty only fiction? What does archaeology reveal? A recent remarkable discovery at an archaeological excavation site at Tel Dan in northern Galilee is reported to support the historicity of David and his dynasty.

In the summer of 1993, an archaeological team, led by Professor Avraham Biran, cleared an area outside the outer gate of ancient Dan. They uncovered a paved plaza. A black basalt stone protruding from

the ground was easily removed. When the stone was turned toward the afternoon sun, the letters sprang to life. “Oh, my God, we have an inscription!” Professor Biran exclaimed.

Professor Biran and his colleague, Professor Joseph Naveh of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, promptly wrote a scientific report on the inscription. Based on this report, an article in the *Biblical Archaeology Review* magazine, March/April 1994, reads: “It’s not often that an archaeological find makes the front page of the *New York Times* (to say nothing of *Time* magazine). But that is what happened last summer to a discovery at Tel Dan, a beautiful mound in northern Galilee, at the foot of Mt. Hermon beside one of the headwaters of the Jordan River.

“There Avraham Biran and his team of archaeologists found a remarkable inscription from the ninth century B.C.E. that refers both to the ‘House of David’ and to the ‘King of Israel.’ This is the first time that the name David has been found in any ancient inscription outside the Bible. That the inscription refers not simply to a ‘David’ but to the House of David, the dynasty of the great Israelite king, is even more remarkable.

“‘King of Israel’ is a term frequently found in the Bible, especially in the Book of Kings. This, however, may be the oldest extra-Biblical reference to Israel in Semitic script. If this inscription proves anything, it shows that both Israel and Judah, contrary to the claims of some scholarly Biblical minimizers, were important kingdoms at this time.”

The dating is based on the shape of the letters, analysis of pottery found near the stone fragment, and the content of the inscription. All three methods point to the same time period, the ninth century B.C.E., somewhat over a hundred years after King David. Scholars believe that the inscription was

part of a victory monument erected in Dan by an Aramaean enemy of both the "King of Israel" and the "[King of the] House of David." The Aramaeans, who worshiped a popular storm-god, Hadad, lived to the east.

During the summer of 1994, two more fragments of this stela were found. Professor Biran reports: "In these two fragments are the name of the Aramean god Hadad, as well as a reference to a battle between the Israelites and the Arameans."

The main fragment recovered in 1993 contained 13 partially visible lines written in old Hebrew script. At that time, dots were used as word dividers to separate words in a text. However, "House of David" is written as one word with the letters "bytdwd" (transliterated into roman letters) instead of "byt" (house), a dot, and then "dwd" (David). Understandably, questions have been raised concerning the interpretation of "bytdwd."

Linguist expert Professor Anson Rainey explains: "Joseph Naveh and Avraham Biran did not explain the inscription in detail, perhaps because they took for granted that readers would know that a word divider between two components in such a construction is often omitted, especially if the combination is a well-established proper name. 'The House of David' was certainly such a proper political and geographic name in the mid-ninth century B.C.E."

* Drawing is based on a photograph appearing in the *Israel Exploration Journal*.



The Tel Dan fragment,*
discovered in 1993 at the
city of Dan, northern Galilee

Another Archaeological Testimony

After that discovery, an expert on the Mesha stela (also called the Moabite Stone), Professor André Lemaire, reported that it also refers to the "House of David."# The Mesha stela, discovered in 1868, has much in common with the Tel Dan stela. They both date to the ninth century B.C.E., are of the same material, are similar in size, and are written in almost identical Semitic script.

As to a new reconstruction of a damaged line on the Mesha stela, Professor Lemaire wrote: "Nearly two years before the discovery of the Tel Dan fragment, I concluded that the Mesha stela contains a reference to the 'House of David.' . . . The reason this reference to the 'House of David' has never been noted before may well be due to the fact that the Mesha stela has never had a proper *editio princeps* [first edition]. That is what I am preparing, 125 years after the discovery of the Mesha stela."

Such archaeological information is of interest because an angel, Jesus himself, his disciples, and people in general testified to the historicity of David. (Matthew 1:1; 12:3; 21:9; Luke 1:32; Acts 2:29) Archaeological discoveries evidently agree that he and his dynasty, the "House of David," are fact, not fiction.

The Mesha stela is known to the readers of the Watch Tower Society's literature. (See *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1990, pages 30-1.) It is on exhibition at the Louvre Museum, Paris.

"Jehovah Answered My Prayers!"

WORLDWIDE, Jehovah's Witnesses are conducting nearly five million home Bible studies with people who are interested in gaining accurate knowledge about God and his wonderful purpose for mankind. Even children among Jehovah's Witnesses are having a share in this work. Consider, for example, a boy named Joel. He symbolized his dedication to Jehovah and was baptized at nine years of age. A year later he had this experience:

"While in the ministry, I met a woman named Candy. I offered her the brochure 'Look! I Am Making All Things New.' She already had it, so I offered her the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. She already had that too. Then I thought, 'I'll offer this woman a Bible study.' She accepted!

"Candy's sister, who was dying of cancer, came to live with her. Additionally, Candy was studying to be a nurse. So for a period of time, the Bible study was discontinued. But my parents and I kept in contact with her by leaving the magazines with her or her husband, Dick.



He told us that she kept the magazines by her bed and would read them at night.

"Eventually, Candy's sister died. My Dad and Mom and I spoke with Candy about the condition of the dead. She decided to resume her Bible study. On a different day, we asked Dick if he would like to study along with Candy and make it a family study. He thought that was a good idea. So now, along with my Dad, I am studying with both Dick and Candy. They are making fine progress and express appreciation for the Bible study.

"I had been praying for a Bible study, and Jehovah answered my prayers!"