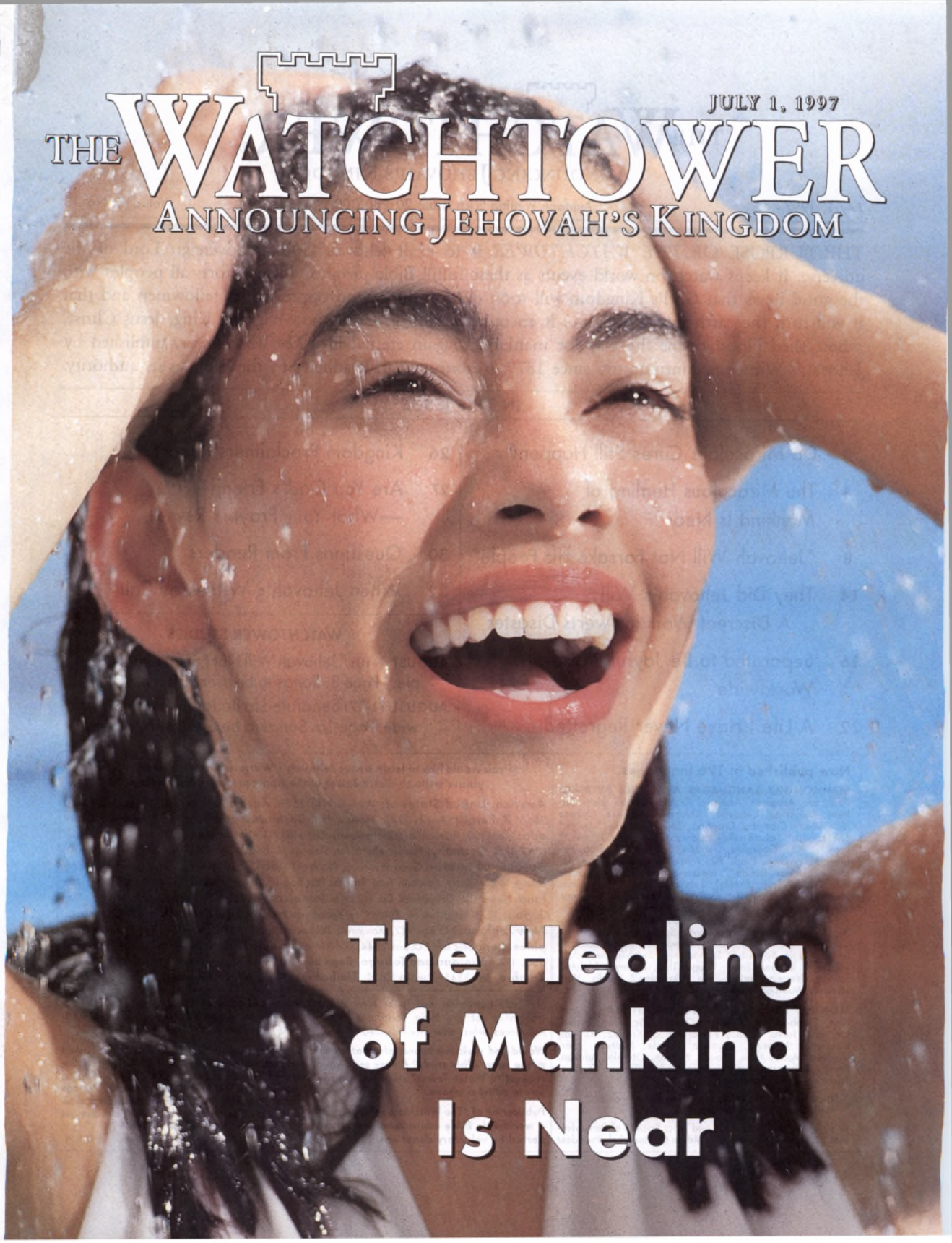
JULY 1, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



The Healing of Mankind Is Near

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

July 1, 1997 | Average Printing Each Issue: 20,980,000 | Vol. 118, No. 13

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

IN THIS ISSUE

3 Do Miraculous Cures Still Happen?

4 The Miraculous Healing of Mankind Is Near

8 "Jehovah Will Not Forsake His People"

14 They Did Jehovah's Will
A Discreet Woman Averts Disaster

16 Separated to Be Joyful Praisers Worldwide

22 A Life I Have Never Regretted

26 Kingdom Proclaimers Report

27 Are You God's Friend?
—What Your Prayers Reveal

30 Questions From Readers

32 When Jehovah's Witnesses Call

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

AUGUST 4-10: "Jehovah Will Not Forsake His People." Page 8. *Songs to be used:* 58, 74.

AUGUST 11-17: Separated to Be Joyful Praisers Worldwide. Page 16. *Songs to be used:* 136, 107.

Now published in 126 languages.

SEMIMONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano,* Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,* Danish,*# Dutch,* Efik, English*# (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,*# French,*# Ga, Georgian, German,*# Greek,* Gujarati, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,* Igbo, Iloko,* Indonesian, Italian,*# Japanese* (also Braille), Kannada, Korean* (also Braille), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Marathi, Myanmar, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Norwegian, Pangasinan, Papiamento, Polish,* Portuguese* (also Braille), Rarotongan, Romanian,* Russian,* Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhalese, Slovak, Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,*# Sranantongo, Swahili, Swedish,*# Tagalog,* Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian,* Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Armenian, Cambodian, Chitonga, Greenlandic, Gun, Hausa, Icelandic, Isoko, Kiluba, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kwanyama/Ndonga, Luganda, Luvale, Maltese, Marshallese, Monokutuba, Moore, Niuean, Otetela, Palauan, Persian, Ponapean, Punjabi, Sango, Silozi, Tongan, Trukese, Tuvaluan, Urdu, Yapese

* Study articles also available in large-print edition.
\# Audiocassettes also available.

© 1997 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved.

Milton G. Henschel, President

If you would like to learn about Jehovah's Witnesses or their publications, please write to Watch Tower at the appropriate address below.

America, United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. ***Australia:*** Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565. ***Bahamas:*** Box N-1247, Nassau, N.P. ***Barbados:*** Fontabelle Rd., Bridgetown. ***Canada:*** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. ***England:*** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. ***Germany:*** Niederselters, Am Steinfels, D-65618 Selters. ***Ghana:*** Box 760, Accra. ***Guyana:*** 50 Brickdam, Georgetown 16. ***Hawaii 96819:*** 2055 Kam IV Rd., Honolulu. ***Hong Kong:*** 4 Kent Road, Kowloon Tong. ***India:*** Post Bag 10, Lonavla, Pune Dis., Mah. 410 401. ***Ireland:*** Newcastle, Greystones, Co. Wicklow. ***Jamaica:*** Box 103, Old Harbour P.O., St. Catherine. ***Japan:*** 1271 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa Pref., 243-04. ***Kenya:*** Box 47788, Nairobi. ***New Zealand:*** P.O. Box 142, Manurewa. ***Nigeria:*** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City, Edo State. ***Philippines, Republic of:*** P.O. Box 2044, 1060 Manila. ***South Africa:*** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. ***Trinidad and Tobago, Republic of:*** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe. ***Zambia:*** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. ***Zimbabwe:*** P. Bag A-6113, Avondale.

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

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Watch Tower, using the appropriate address above.

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

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

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

Printed in U.S.A.

Do Miraculous Cures Still Happen?

"ACCEPT Jesus and be cured!" Slogans like this one led Alexandre, a member of an Evangelical church, to believe that to take medicine for his illness would betray a lack of faith. He became convinced that his faith alone would bring the miraculous cure he needed. Benedita, a fervent Catholic, was deeply touched when she heard about healing miracles in the sanctuary of Aparecida do Norte, in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Using some magical words that her aunt had taught her, Benedita prayed to Our Lady of Aparecida, Anthony, and other "saints" for power to heal the sick.

Apparently, even late in the 20th century, many people still believe in miraculous cures—but why? Likely, some are frustrated when doctors are unable to do much to relieve the sickness, pain, and suffering of their loved ones, especially their children. Those afflicted by chronic illnesses may feel that in view of the high cost of modern medicine, they have nothing to lose in seeking faith healing. Some see on TV various churches and individuals offering cures for AIDS, depression, cancer, insanity, high blood pressure, and many other ailments. Whether they have any faith in such claims or not, they may turn to them as the last resort. Still others who believe that their sickness is caused by evil spirits may feel that conventional medicine lacks the power to help them.

On the other hand, there are those who strongly oppose, even condemn, the idea of miracle cures by dead "saints" or living practitioners. According to the *Jornal da Tarde,* immunologist Dráusio Varella feels that the belief "mocks the faith of the unwary and the desperate." He adds: "Hoping in miracles, many may abandon serious medical treatment because of these deceivers." And *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* explains: "Unorthodox healings have in the past been associated with sacred places and religious rites, and medical science is inclined to attribute all such healings to the normal process of suggestion working under favourable conditions." Still, there are many who believe that they really were cured by a miracle. To them, the healing worked!

Those who are familiar with the Bible are aware that Jesus Christ healed the sick on many occasions, doing this by the "power of God." (Luke 9:42, 43) Thus they may wonder, 'Is God's power still operating and causing miraculous healings today?' If so, why do attempts to cure fail to bring the promised results? Is it because the patient does not have enough faith or because his donation is not big enough? Is it right for a Christian to seek a miraculous cure when he is suffering from a painful or perhaps incurable disease? And will unfailing miraculous cures of the kind Jesus performed ever occur again? You can find the answers to these vital questions in the next article.

The Miraculous Healing of Mankind Is Near

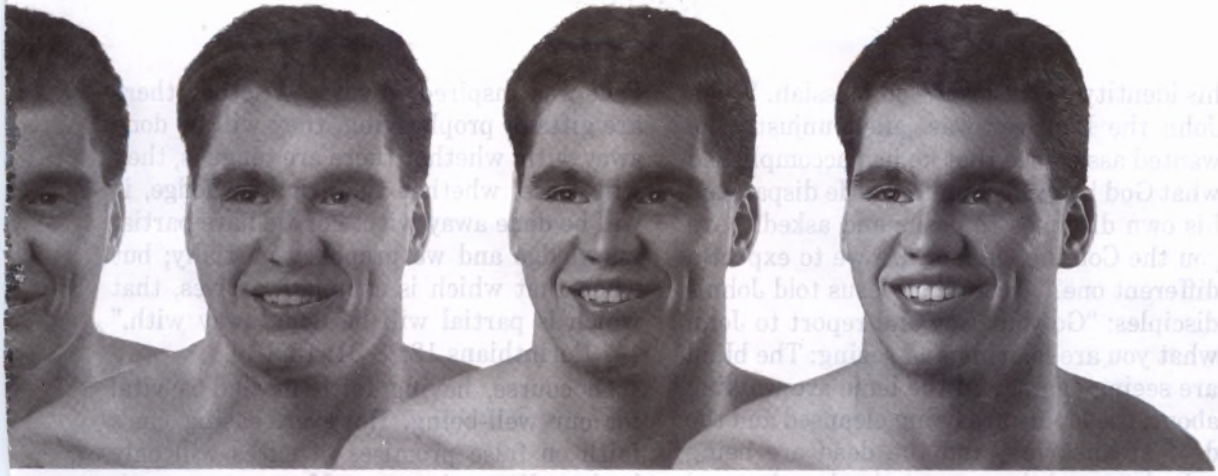
"WE NEVER saw the like of it." So said eyewitnesses of the miraculous, instant healing of a paralytic man by Jesus. (Mark 2:12) Jesus also cured the blind, the dumb, and the lame, and his followers did likewise. By what power did Jesus do it? What part did faith play? What light do these first-century experiences shed on miraculous healing today?—Matthew 15:30, 31.

"Your Faith Has Made You Well"

Faith healers of today are fond of citing Jesus' statement to a woman suffering 12 years from a flow of blood who came to him for cure: "Your faith has made you well." (Luke 8:43-48) Did Jesus' statement indicate that her cure was dependent on her faith? Was that an example of "faith healing" as it is practiced today?

When we read the Bible record carefully, we see that on most occasions Jesus and his disciples did not require that the sick declare their faith before being cured. The woman cited above came and, without having said anything to Jesus, quietly touched his garment from behind and "instantly her flow of blood stopped." On another occasion, Jesus healed a man who was among those who had come to arrest him. He even healed a man who had no idea who Jesus was. —Luke 22:50, 51; John 5:5-9, 13; 9:24-34.

What role, then, did faith play? When Jesus and his disciples were in the district of Tyre and Sidon, a Phoenician woman came and cried out: "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David. My daughter is badly demonized." Imagine her despair as she pleaded: "Lord, help me!" Filled with pity, Jesus replied: "O woman, great is your faith; let it happen to you as you wish." And her daughter was healed "from that hour on." (Matthew 15:21-28) Clearly, faith was involved, but whose faith? Notice that it was the mother's faith, not the sick child's, that Jesus praised. And faith in what? By addressing



Jesus as "Lord, Son of David," the woman was publicly acknowledging that Jesus was the promised Messiah. It was not a simple expression of faith in God or faith in the power of the healer. When Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well," he meant that without faith in him as the Messiah, the afflicted ones would not have come to him to be healed.

From these Scriptural examples, we can see that the healing performed by Jesus was far different from what is commonly seen or claimed today. There was no strong emotional display—shouting, chanting, wailing, swooning, and so on—from the crowds and no dramatic frenzy on the part of Jesus. In addition, Jesus never failed to heal the infirm on the pretext that they lacked faith or that their offering had not been generous enough.

Cures by the Power of God

How did the healings of Jesus and his disciples take place? "Jehovah's power was there for him to do healing," answers the Bible. (Luke 5:17) After one healing, says Luke 9:43, "they all began to be astounded at the majestic power of God." Appropriately, Jesus did not direct attention to himself as the healer. On one occasion he told a man whom he had freed from demon harassment: "Go home to your relatives, and report to them all the things Jehovah has done for you and the mercy he had on you." —Mark 5:19.

Since Jesus and the apostles healed by the power of God, it is easy to see why faith on the part of the one being cured was not always needed for healing. However, strong faith on the part of the *healer* was necessary. Hence, when Jesus' followers were unable to expel a particularly powerful demon, Jesus told them the reason: "Because of your little faith."—Matthew 17:20.

Purpose of Miraculous Healing

Even though Jesus did much healing throughout his earthly ministry, he was not primarily pursuing a 'healing ministry.' His miraculous healing—for which he never charged the people or solicited any donations—was secondary to his main concern, that of "preaching the good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 9:35) The record says that on one occasion "he received them kindly and began to speak to them about the kingdom of God, and he healed those needing a cure." (Luke 9:11) In the Gospel accounts, Jesus was frequently addressed as "Teacher" but never as "Healer."

Why, then, did Jesus perform miraculous cures? Principally it was to establish

his identity as the promised Messiah. When John the Baptizer was jailed unjustly, he wanted assurance that he had accomplished what God had sent him to do. He dispatched his own disciples to Jesus and asked: "Are you the Coming One, or are we to expect a different one?" Note what Jesus told John's disciples: "Go your way and report to John what you are hearing and seeing: The blind are seeing again, and the lame are walking about, the lepers are being cleansed and the deaf are hearing, and the dead are being raised up, and the poor are having the good news declared to them."—Matthew 11:2-5.

Yes, the fact that Jesus performed not only healing but also the other miraculous works recorded in the Gospels firmly established his identity as "the Coming One," the promised Messiah. There was no need for anyone to "expect a different one."

Miraculous Cures Today?

Should we, then, expect God to prove his power today through cures? No. With the miraculous works he performed by the power of God, Jesus had established beyond any doubt that he was the Messiah that God had promised would come. Jesus' mighty acts are recorded in the Bible for all to read. There is no need for God to prove the point by repeating such acts to every generation of people.

Interestingly, cures and other miraculous works were convincing only to a certain degree. Even some eyewitnesses of Jesus' miracles did not believe that he had the backing of his heavenly Father. "Although he had performed so many signs before them, they were not putting faith in him." (John 12:37) That is why, after discussing the various miraculous gifts—prophesying, speaking in tongues, healing, and so on—that God had given various members of the first-century Christian congregation, the apostle Paul was inspired to say: "Whether there are gifts of prophesying, they will be done away with; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will be done away with. For we have partial knowledge and we prophesy partially; but when that which is complete arrives, that which is partial will be done away with." —1 Corinthians 12:28-31; 13:8-10.

Of course, having faith in God is vital for our well-being. However, basing one's faith on false promises of cures will only lead to disappointment. Moreover, regarding the time of the end, Jesus gave this warning: "False Christs and false prophets will arise and will give great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones." (Matthew 24:24) Besides quackery and frauds, there would also be manifestations of demonic power. As a result, claims of unexplainable events should not surprise us, and these are certainly no basis for genuine faith in God.

Since no one today performs cures as Jesus did, are we at a disadvantage? Not at all. Actually, those healed by Jesus eventually could become sick again. They all grew old and died. The healing benefits they received were relatively short-lived. Yet, Jesus' miraculous cures have lasting meaning in that they foreshadowed future blessings.

Hence, after examining God's Word, the Bible, Alexandre and Benedita, mentioned before, no longer put their faith in modern faith healing and spiritistic cures. At the same time, they are convinced that miraculous healings are *not* things of the past. Why so? Like millions worldwide, they look forward to blessings of healing under God's Kingdom.—Matthew 6:10.

Sickness and Death No More

As we have seen earlier, the main objective of Jesus' ministry was not to heal

Under God's Kingdom mankind will be miraculously healed

the sick and perform other miracles. Rather, he made the preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom his main work. (Matthew 9:35; Luke 4:43; 8:1) That Kingdom is the means by which God will accomplish the miraculous healing of mankind and undo all the damage that sin and imperfection have wreaked upon the human family. How and when will he accomplish this?

Looking centuries ahead, Christ Jesus gave his apostle John a prophetic vision: "Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ!" (Revelation 12: 10) All the evidence shows that since 1914 the great opposer of God, Satan, has been cast down to the vicinity of the earth, and the Kingdom is now operating as a reality! Jesus has been installed as the King of the Messianic Kingdom and is now ready to make big changes on earth.

In the very near future, Jesus' heavenly government will rule over a righteous new human society, in effect "a new earth." (2 Peter 3:13) What will conditions be like then? Here is a glorious foreglimpse: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away... And [God] will wipe out 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 21:1, 4.

Can you imagine what life will be like when the miraculous healing of mankind comes true? "No resident will say: 'I am sick.' The people that are dwelling in the land will be those pardoned for their error." Yes, God will accomplish what faith healers could never do. "He will actually swallow up death forever." Indeed, "the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces."—Isaiah 25:8; 33:24.

"JEHOVAH WILL NOT FORSAKE HIS PEOPLE"

"Many are the calamities of the righteous one, but out of them all Jehovah delivers him."—PSALM 34:19.

IN FULFILLMENT of Bible prophecy, Jehovah's worshipers dwell in a spiritual paradise. (2 Corinthians 12:1-4) Jehovah's Witnesses belong to an international fellowship characterized by love and unity. (John 13:35) They enjoy a deep and comprehensive knowledge of Bible truths. (Isaiah 54:13) How grateful they are to Jehovah that he is granting them the privilege of being guests in his spiritual tent! —Psalm 15:1.

2 While all in Jehovah's organization enjoy spiritual prosperity, some seem to live in relative peace and tranquillity while others experience afflictions of one sort or another. Many Christians find themselves in a pitiable position for long periods of time and with no relief in sight. Discouragement is natural under such circumstances. (Proverbs 13:12) Are calamities evidence of God's displeasure? Is Jehovah providing special protection to some Christians while forsaking others?

3 The Bible answers: "When under trial, let no one say: 'I am being tried by God.' For with evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." (James 1: 13) Jehovah is the Protector and Sustainer of his people. (Psalm 91:2-6) "Jehovah will not forsake his people." (Psalm 94:14) This does not mean that faithful worshipers will not experience suffering. The present world system of things is governed by individuals who are inherently imperfect. Many are corrupt, and a few are outright evil. None of them look to Jehovah for wisdom. This results in much human suffering. The Bible makes clear that Jehovah's people cannot always avoid the sad consequences of human imperfection and wickedness.—Acts 14:22.

Loyal Christians Expect to Suffer

4 Although not part of the world, Jesus' followers live in the midst of this system of things. (John 17:15, 16) Satan is exposed in the Bible as the dominating force behind this world. (1 John 5:19) Hence, all Christians can expect sooner or later to have to face serious problems. With that in mind, the apostle Peter says: "Keep your senses, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone. But take your stand

1, 2. (a) How is Jehovah blessing his people today? (b) What are many Christians faced with, and what questions arise?

3. (a) Is Jehovah responsible for the adversities experienced by his people? (b) Why do even faithful worshipers of Jehovah experience human suffering?

4. What can all Christians expect as long as they live in this wicked system of things, and why?

against him, solid in the faith, knowing that the same things in the way of sufferings are being accomplished in the entire association of your brothers in the world." (1 Peter 5:8, 9) Yes, the entire association of Christians can expect sufferings.

5 Even if we deeply love Jehovah and are loyal to his principles, we will experience sad things in life. Jesus made this clear in his illustration recorded at Matthew 7:24-27, where he drew a contrast between those who obey his words and those who do not. He compared obedient disciples to a discreet man who builds a house upon a solid rock-mass. Those who do not obey his words he likened to a foolish man who builds his house upon the sand. After a severe storm, only the house built on the rock-mass survives. Note that in the case of the discreet man's house, "the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house, but it did not cave in." Jesus did not promise that the discreet man would always enjoy peace and tranquillity. Rather, that man's discretion would prepare him to weather the storm. A similar thought is conveyed in the illustration of the sower. In it Jesus explains that even obedient worshipers "with a fine and good heart" would "bear fruit with endurance." —Luke 8:4-15.

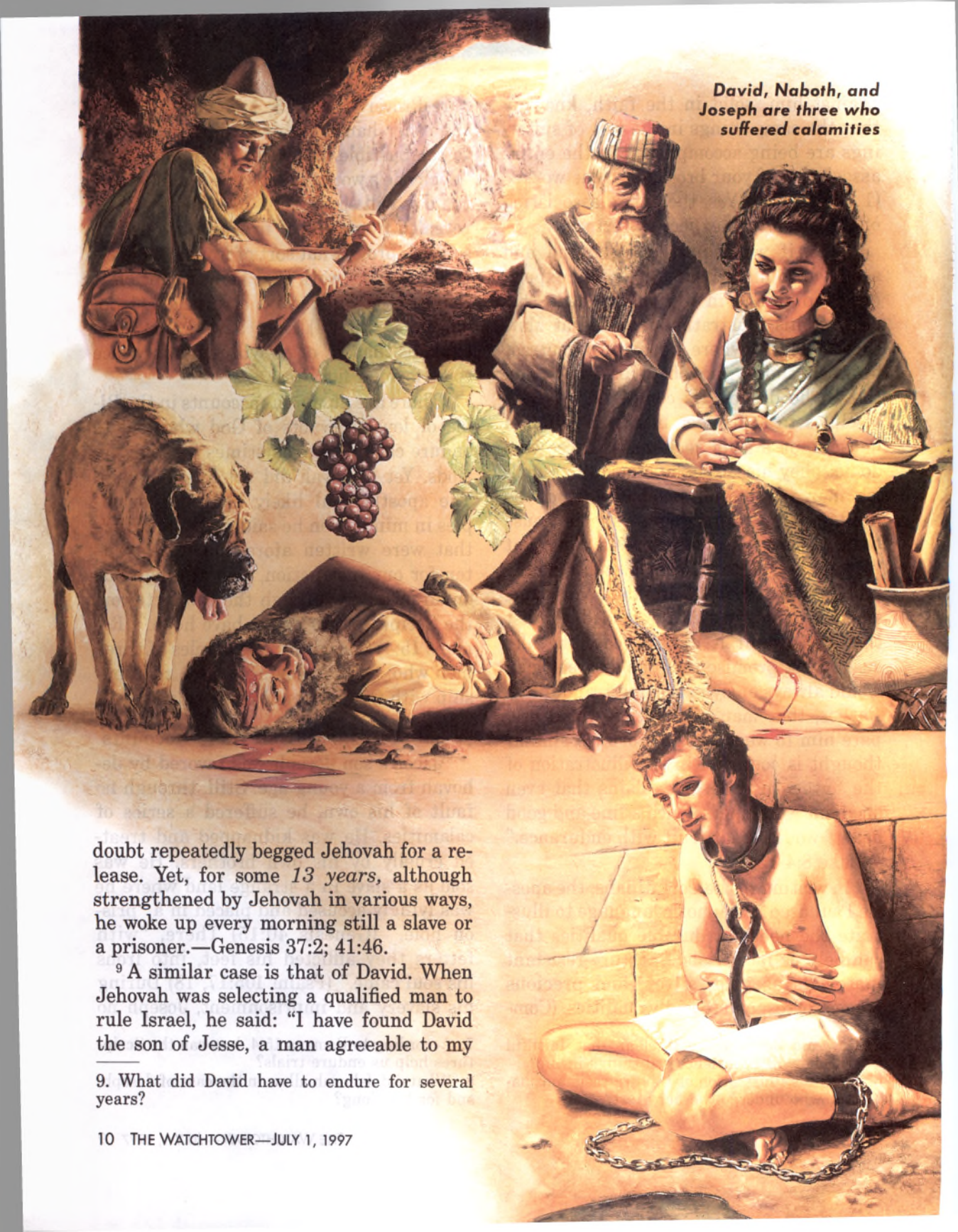
6 In writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul used metaphoric language to illustrate the need for durable qualities that can help us face trials. Such fire-resistant materials as gold, silver, and precious stones correspond to godly qualities. (Compare Proverbs 3:13-15; 1 Peter 1:6, 7.) On the other hand, fleshly traits are likened to combustible materials. Then Paul says: "Each one's work will become manifest, for the day will show it up, because it will be revealed by means of fire; and the fire itself will prove what sort of work each one's is. If anyone's work that he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward." (1 Corinthians 3:10-14) Here again, the Bible explains that *all of us* will inevitably face some form of fiery test.

7 There are numerous accounts in the Bible of loyal servants of God who had to endure calamities, sometimes for long periods. Yet, Jehovah did not forsake them. The apostle Paul likely had such examples in mind when he said: "All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) Consider the examples of three men who, while enjoying a close relationship with God, suffered many calamities.

What We Learn From Bible Accounts

8 Jacob's son Joseph was favored by Jehovah from a young age. Still, through no fault of his own, he suffered a series of calamities. He was kidnapped and treated cruelly by his own brothers. He was sold as a slave in a strange land where he was lyingly accused and placed in a "prison hole." (Genesis 40:15) There, "with fetters they afflicted his feet, into irons his soul came." (Psalm 105:17, 18) During his slavery and imprisonment, Joseph no

5. How did Jesus make it clear that faithful Christians will experience sad things in life?
6. In Paul's illustration of the fire-resistant materials, who undergo the fiery test?
7. According to Romans 15:4, how can the Scriptures help us endure trials?
8. What did Jehovah allow in the case of Joseph, and for how long?



David, Naboth, and Joseph are three who suffered calamities

doubt repeatedly begged Jehovah for a release. Yet, for some *13 years,* although strengthened by Jehovah in various ways, he woke up every morning still a slave or a prisoner.—Genesis 37:2; 41:46.

[9] A similar case is that of David. When Jehovah was selecting a qualified man to rule Israel, he said: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man agreeable to my

9. What did David have to endure for several years?

heart." (Acts 13:22) Despite his favored position in Jehovah's eyes, David suffered much. In mortal danger, he hid for several years in the wilderness, in caves, in crevices, and on foreign ground. Hunted like a wild beast, he suffered discouragement and fear. Nevertheless, he endured in Jehovah's strength. David could rightly say from his own experience: "Many are the calamities of the righteous one, but out of them all Jehovah delivers him." —Psalm 34:19.

[10] In the prophet Elijah's day, there were only 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to the false god Baal. (1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4) Naboth, who was likely one of them, became the victim of a terrible injustice. He suffered the humiliation of being accused of blasphemy. Found guilty, he was convicted and sentenced by royal decree to die by stoning, and his blood was licked up by dogs. Even his sons were put to death! Yet, he was innocent of the charge. The witnesses against him were liars. The whole affair was a plot hatched by Queen Jezebel so that the king could get his hands on Naboth's vineyard.—1 Kings 21:1-19; 2 Kings 9:26.

[11] Joseph, David, and Naboth are but three of the many faithful men and women mentioned in the Bible who suffered calamities. The apostle Paul wrote a historical review of Jehovah's servants through the ages. In it he spoke of those who "received their trial by mockings and scourgings, indeed, more than that, by bonds and prisons. They were stoned, they were tried, they were sawn asunder, they died by slaughter with the sword, they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, while they were in want, in tribulation, under ill-treatment; and the world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and mountains and caves and dens of the earth." (Hebrews 11:36-38) But Jehovah did not forsake them.

10. What extreme calamity befell Naboth and his family?

11. What does the apostle Paul tell us about faithful men and women in Bible history?

Jehovah Cares for Those Who Suffer

[12] What about Jehovah's people today? As an organization, we can count on divine protection and safe passage through the last days and the great tribulation. (Isaiah 54:17; Revelation 7:9-17) However, as individuals, we recognize that "time and unforeseen occurrence" befall all humans. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Today there are many faithful Christians who are suffering calamities. Some endure extreme poverty. The Bible speaks of Christian "orphans and widows" who have tribulation. (James 1:27) Others suffer as a result of natural disasters, wars, crime, abuse of power, sickness, and death.

[13] For example, in their 1996 reports to the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, Watch Tower branch offices related that some of our brothers and sisters are suffering imprisonment in deplorable conditions because of their adherence to Bible principles. Three congregations in a South American country were dissolved when guerrilla groups forced hundreds of Witnesses to evacuate the area. In a West African country, some Witnesses caught in a civil-war skirmish were killed. In a Central American country, the already critical

12. What are some of the afflictions experienced by Jehovah's Witnesses today?

13. What difficult experiences have recently been reported?

financial situation of some brothers was worsened by the onslaught of a hurricane. In other places where poverty and food shortages may not be serious problems, negative influences may dampen the joy of some. Others are weighed down by the pressures of modern-day living. Because of the public's apathy, still others may feel discouraged when they preach the good news of the Kingdom.

14 These situations are not to be construed as evidence of God's displeasure. Remember the case of Job and the many adversities he suffered. He was "a man blameless and upright." (Job 1:8) How disheartened Job must have felt when Eliphaz charged him with wrongdoing! (Job, chapters 4, 5, 22) We do not want to be quick to conclude that we experience calamities because we have failed Jehovah in some way or because Jehovah has withdrawn his blessing. Negative thinking in the face of tribulation could weaken our faith. (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3, 5) When experiencing distress, it is best to meditate on the fact that Jehovah and Jesus are close to the righteous regardless of what happens.

15 The apostle Paul reassures us when he says: "Who will separate us from the love of the Christ? Will tribulation or distress or persecution or hunger or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor governments nor things now here nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creation will be able to separate us from God's love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35, 38, 39) Jehovah is deeply concerned about us and is aware of our suffering. While still a fugitive, David wrote: "The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their cry for help. Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart." (Psalm 34:15, 18; Matthew 18:6, 14) Our heavenly Father cares for us and feels pity for those who suffer. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) He provides what we need to endure, whatever suffering we may experience.

14. (a) What do we learn from Job's example? (b) Instead of thinking negatively, what should we do when we are experiencing distress?

15. How do we know that Jehovah is deeply concerned about the calamities suffered by his people?

Jehovah's Gifts Sustain Us

16 Although we cannot expect an adversity-free life in this old system of things, we are "not left in the lurch." (2 Corinthians 4:8, 9) Jesus promised to provide his followers with a helper. He said: "I will request the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, the spirit of the truth." (John 14:16, 17) At Pentecost 33 C.E., the apostle Peter told his listeners that they could receive "the free gift of the holy spirit." (Acts 2:38) Is the holy spirit helping us today? Yes! Jehovah's active force gives us wonderful fruitage: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22, 23) All of these are invaluable qualities that help us to endure.

17 The holy spirit also helps us to understand that present tribulations are "momentary and light" when compared with the reward of everlasting life. (2 Corinthi-

16. What provision from Jehovah helps us to endure, and how?

17. What are some Bible truths that strengthen our faith and determination to wait patiently on Jehovah?

ans 4:16-18) We are convinced that God will not forget our works and the love we show for him. (Hebrews 6:9-12) Reading the inspired words of the Bible, we are comforted by the examples of faithful servants of old who endured many calamities but who were pronounced happy. James writes: "Brothers, take as a pattern of the suffering of evil and the exercising of patience the prophets, who spoke in the name of Jehovah. Look! We pronounce happy those who have endured." (James 5:10, 11) The Bible promises "power beyond what is normal" to help us endure trials. Jehovah also blesses us with the resurrection hope. (2 Corinthians 1:8-10; 4:7) By reading the Bible daily and meditating on these promises, we will strengthen our faith and our determination to wait patiently on God.—Psalm 42:5.

[18] In addition, Jehovah has given us the spiritual paradise wherein we can enjoy the genuine love of our Christian brothers and sisters. We all have a role to play in comforting one another. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) Christian overseers in particular can be a major source of comfort and refreshment. (Isaiah 32:2) As "gifts in men," they are commissioned to build up those who suffer, to "speak consolingly to the depressed souls," and to "support the weak." (Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5:14) Elders are encouraged to make good use of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines, as well as other publications provided by "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) These contain a wealth of Bible-based counsel that can help us resolve —and even prevent—some of the problems that cause us anxiety. May we imitate Jehovah by comforting and encouraging one another during difficult times!

[19] As we move deeper into the last days and conditions in the present system of things worsen, Christians do what they can to avoid calamities. (Proverbs 22:3) Good judgment, soundness of mind, and knowledge of Bible principles can help us make wise decisions. (Proverbs 3:21, 22) We listen to Jehovah's Word and obey it to avoid making unnecessary mistakes. (Psalm 38:4) Nevertheless, we realize that no amount of effort on our part can completely eliminate suffering from our lives. In this system of things, many righteous ones face severe adversities. However, we can meet our trials with the complete confidence that "Jehovah will not forsake his people." (Psalm 94:14) And we know that this system of things and its afflictions will soon be gone. Therefore, may we resolve not to "give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out."—Galatians 6:9.

18. (a) At 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4, what are we encouraged to do? (b) How can Christian overseers prove to be sources of comfort and refreshment?

19. (a) What helps us to avoid some adversities? (b) Ultimately, in whom must we trust, and what will enable us to face trials?

What Did We Learn?

- ☐ What trials are experienced by the entire association of Christians?
- ☐ What Bible examples help us to understand that calamities are not evidence of Jehovah's displeasure?
- ☐ How does Jehovah feel about the adversities suffered by his people?
- ☐ What are some of the gifts from Jehovah that help us endure trials?

A Discreet Woman Averts Disaster

A SENSIBLE woman married to a good-for-nothing man—that was the situation of Abigail and Nabal. Abigail was "good in discretion and beautiful in form." In contrast, Nabal was "harsh and bad in his practices." (1 Samuel 25:3) The drama that unfolded involving this ill-matched couple left their names indelibly etched in Bible history. Let us see how.

A Favor Taken for Granted

It was the 11th century B.C.E. David had been anointed as Israel's future king, but instead of ruling he was running. The reigning king, Saul, was determined to put him to death. As a result, David was forced to live as a fugitive. He and some 600 comrades eventually found refuge in the wilderness of Paran, south of Judah and toward the wilderness of Sinai.—1 Samuel 23:13; 25:1.

While there, they encountered shepherds employed by a man named Nabal. This wealthy descendant of Caleb owned 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats, and he sheared his sheep in Carmel, a city south of Hebron and perhaps only some 25 miles from Paran.* David and his men helped Nabal's shepherds guard their flocks against thieves who roamed through the wilderness.—1 Samuel 25:14-16.

Meanwhile, sheepshearing had begun in Carmel. This was a festive occasion, similar to harvesttime for the farmer. It was also a time of open-handed generosity, when sheep owners would reward those who had worked for them. So David was not being presumptuous when he sent ten men to the city of Carmel to ask Nabal for food in repayment for the service that they had performed in behalf of his flocks.—1 Samuel 25:4-9.

Nabal's response was anything but generous. "Who is David?" he sneered. Then, implying that David and his men were no more than runaway servants, he asked: "Do I have to take my bread and my water and my slaughtered meat that I have butchered for my shearers and give it to men of whom I do not even know from where they are?" When David heard of this, he said to his men: "Gird on every one his sword!" About 400 men prepared themselves for battle.—1 Samuel 25:10-13.

Abigail's Discretion

Nabal's abusive words came to the attention of his wife, Abigail. Perhaps this was not the first time she had had to intercede and act as peacemaker for Nabal. In any case, Abigail acted immediately. Without telling Nabal, she gathered provisions—including five sheep and an abundance of food—and went out to meet David in the wilderness.—1 Samuel 25:18-20.

When Abigail caught sight of David, she at once prostrated herself before him. "Do not let my lord set his heart upon this good-for-nothing man Nabal," she pleaded with him. "As regards this gift blessing that your maidservant has brought to my lord, it must be given to the young men that are walking about in the steps of my lord." She added: "Let this [situation regarding Nabal] not become to you a cause for staggering or a stumbling block to the heart of my lord." The Hebrew word here translated "staggering" implies qualms of conscience. So Abigail warned David against taking hasty action that he would later regret. —1 Samuel 25:23-31.

David listened to Abigail. "Blessed be your sensibleness, and blessed be you who have restrained

* The wilderness of Paran is understood to extend as far north as Beer-sheba. This portion of land included considerable pasture ground.

Abigail brings gifts to David

me this day from entering into bloodguilt," he said to her. "If you had not hastened that you might come to meet me, there would certainly not have remained to Nabal until the morning light anyone urinating against a wall."*—1 Samuel 25:32-34.

Lessons for Us

This Bible account shows that it is by no means wrong for a godly woman to take appropriate initiative if it is needed. Abigail acted against the wishes of her husband, Nabal, but the Bible does not censure her for this. On the contrary, it praises her as a woman of discretion and sensibleness. By taking the initiative in this crisis situation, Abigail saved many lives.

Although in general a wife should display a spirit of godly subjection, she may properly disagree with her husband when right principles are at stake. Of course, she should strive to maintain a "quiet and mild spirit" and should not act independently merely out of spite, pride, or rebelliousness. (1 Peter 3:4) However, a godly wife should not feel pressured to do anything that she knows is highly unwise or in violation of Bible principles. Truly, the account of Abigail offers a solid argument against those who insist that the Bible depicts women as mere slaves.

This account also teaches us about self-control. At times, David displayed this quality to the full. For example, he refused to put vengeful King Saul to death, even though he had ample opportunity to do so and Saul's death would have brought David peace. (1 Samuel 24:2-7) In contrast, when Nabal insultingly spurned him, David was caught off guard and swore revenge. This is a clear warning to Christians, who strive to "return evil for evil to no one." In *all* circumstances, they should follow Paul's admonition: "If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath."—Romans 12:17-19.

* The phrase "anyone urinating against a wall" was a Hebrew idiom for males, evidently an expression of contempt. —Compare 1 Kings 14:10.

SEPARATED TO BE JOYFUL PRAISERS WORLDWIDE

"Praise Jah, you people! Offer praise, O you servants of Jehovah, praise the name of Jehovah."—PSALM 113:1.

JEHOVAH GOD is the Grand Creator of heaven and earth, our Universal Sovereign for all eternity. He is fully worthy of our enthusiastic praise. This is why Psalm 113:1-3 commands us: "Praise Jah, you people! Offer praise, O you servants of Jehovah, praise the name of Jehovah. May Jehovah's name become blessed from now on and to time indefinite. From the rising of the sun until its setting Jehovah's name is to be praised."

[2] As God's Witnesses, we rejoice to do this. How thrilling it is that Jehovah God will soon cause this joyful song of praise that we are singing today to fill the whole earth! (Psalm 22:27) Is your voice being heard in this great worldwide choir? If so, how happy it must make you to be separated from this disunited, joyless world!

[3] Our praising Jehovah unitedly surely makes us distinctive, unique. We speak and teach in agreement and use the same methods to declare 'the abundance of Jehovah's goodness.' (Psalm 145:7) Yes, as Jehovah's dedicated people, we are set apart for the service of our God, Jehovah. God told his ancient dedicated people, Israel, to keep separate from the nations around them and be unsullied by the practices of those nations. (Exodus 34:12-16) He gave his people laws to help them do this. Likewise today, Jehovah has given us his Holy Word, the Bible. Its instruction shows us how we can keep separate from this world. (2 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) We are not set apart by isolation in monasteries and convents, as are the monks and nuns of Babylon the Great. Following Jesus Christ's example, we are *public* praisers of Jehovah.

1, 2. (a) In harmony with Psalm 113:1-3, who is worthy of our enthusiastic praise? (b) What question is it appropriate to ask?

3. (a) What makes Jehovah's people distinctive, unique? (b) In what ways are we set apart?

Imitate Jehovah's Chief Praiser

[4] Jesus never deviated from his purpose to praise Jehovah. And this set him apart from the world. In the synagogues and at the temple in Jerusalem, he praised God's holy name. Whether on the mountaintop or at the seashore, wherever crowds would gather, Jesus publicly preached Jehovah's truths. He declared: "I publicly praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth." (Matthew 11:25) Even when on trial before Pontius Pilate, Jesus testified: "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." (John 18:37) Jesus appreciated the

4. How did Jesus set the example in praising Jehovah?

Wherever he was, Jesus bore witness to Jehovah and publicly praised him

importance of his work. Wherever he was, Jesus bore witness to Jehovah and publicly praised him.

5 At Psalm 22:22, we find this prophetic statement concerning Jehovah's Chief Praiser: "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the middle of the congregation I shall praise you." And at Hebrews 2:11, 12, the apostle Paul applies these verses to the Lord Jesus and to those whom Jehovah God has sanctified for heavenly glory. Like him, they are not ashamed to praise Jehovah's name in the middle of the congregation. Do we have this same mental attitude when attending our congregation meetings? Our enthusiastic participation in the meetings, both mentally and vocally, praises Jehovah. But does our joyful praise end there?

6 According to Matthew 5:14-16, the Lord Jesus also commissioned his followers to let their light shine so that others would praise Jehovah. He said: "You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens." Lovers of the light bring glory to God. Do they do this merely by saying and doing nice, humanitarian things? No, rather they

5. To whom does Psalm 22:22 apply, and what should be our attitude?

6. What commission did Jesus give his disciples, and how do lovers of the light glorify God?

do it by unitedly glorifying Jehovah. Yes, lovers of light dedicate themselves to God and become his joyful praisers. Have you taken this happy step?

Joy From Praising Jehovah

7 Why are Jehovah's praisers so joyful? Because joy is a fruit of God's holy spirit. At Galatians 5:22, it is listed right after love. Jesus' disciples in the first century manifested this fruit of Jehovah's spirit. Why, on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., when God poured out his spirit on about 120 of Jesus' disciples, all of them started to praise Jehovah in different tongues. Reverent Jews who had come to Jerusalem from many nations 'were bewildered and astonished.' They exclaimed: "We hear them speaking in our tongues about the magnificent things of God"! (Acts 2:1-11) What was the result of this wonderful multilingual praising of Jehovah? About 3,000 Jews and Jewish proselytes accepted the Kingdom good news concerning the Messiah. They got baptized, received the holy spirit, and eagerly added their voices as joyful praisers of Jehovah. (Acts 2:37-42) What a blessing that was!

8 The report continues: "Day after day they were in constant attendance at the temple with one accord, and they took their meals in private homes and partook of food with great rejoicing and sincerity of heart, praising God and finding favor with all the people. At the same time Jehovah continued to join to them daily those being saved." (Acts 2:46, 47) Was it only their associating together and partaking of food that brought them great rejoicing? No, their main joy came from praising Jehovah God day after day. And their joy intensified when they saw thousands respond to their message of salvation. It is the same with us today.

Joyful Praisers in All Nations

9 Jehovah did not want the light-bearing activity of his servants to be limited to one nation. Beginning in 36 C.E., therefore, he gave people of all nations the opportunity to hear his good news. At God's direction, Peter went to the home of a Gentile army officer in Caesarea. There he found Cornelius assembled with his closest friends and family. As they listened intently to Peter's words, they exercised faith in Jesus in their hearts. How do we know? Because God's holy spirit came upon those Gentile believers. Normally, the gift of God's spirit was bestowed only *after* baptism, but on that occasion Jehovah indicated his approval of these non-Jews before their immersion. If Jehovah had not done that, Peter could not have been sure that God was now accepting Gentiles as His servants and that they qualified for water baptism.—Acts 10:34, 35, 47, 48.

10 From ancient times, Jehovah foretold that people of all nations would praise him. He would have joyful praisers in every land. To prove this, the apostle Paul quoted prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures. He told the international congregation of Christians in Rome: "Welcome

7. Why are Jehovah's praisers so joyful, and what joy was theirs on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E.?

8. After Pentecost, what did the Christians do to enhance their joy?

9. (a) When and how did God begin to give people of all nations the opportunity to hear his good news? (b) Why was holy spirit poured out on Cornelius and his associates before their baptism?

10. How was it foretold from ancient times that people of all nations would praise Jehovah?

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.'" —Romans 15:7-11.

11 People cannot unitedly praise Jehovah unless they rest their hope upon Jesus Christ, the one whom God has appointed to rule over people of all nations. To help them appreciate His truths that lead to eternal life, God has set up an international teaching program. He is giving direction through his faithful slave class. (Matthew 24:45-47) The result? More than five million joyful voices are singing Jehovah's praises in over 230 lands. And millions more are showing interest in doing the same. Look at how many attended the Memorial in 1996: 12,921,933. Marvelous!

A Great Crowd of Joyful Praisers Foretold

12 In vision, the apostle John beheld "a great crowd" out of all nations. (Revelation 7:9) What is the theme of the praises that this great crowd are singing along with God's anointed remnant? John tells us: "Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Revelation 7:10) This is being boldly declared in every part of the world. Waving palm branches, so to speak, we unitedly hail God as the Universal Sovereign and joyfully confess before heaven and earth that "we owe" our salvation to him and his Son, the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Oh, what a thrill the apostle John experienced in seeing this stirring vision of the great crowd! And what a thrill we have today in seeing, and even being part of, the living reality of what John saw!

13 As Jehovah's servants, we proudly bear his name. (Isaiah 43:10, 12) Our being Witnesses of Jehovah makes us different from this world. What a joy it is to bear God's distinctive name and to have the doing of his divine work as our purpose in life! Jehovah's grand purpose to sanctify his holy name and to vindicate his universal sovereignty by means of the Kingdom has given meaning to our lives. And he has helped us to have a place in his divine purpose regarding his name and Kingdom. This he has done in three ways.

Entrusted With the Truth

14 First, Jehovah has entrusted his people with the truth. The most exciting revelation is that his Kingdom began ruling in 1914. (Revelation 12:10) This heavenly government is different from the typical kingdom in Jerusalem, where kings in the line of David used to be enthroned. That

11. How has God helped people of all nations to learn his truths, and what has been the result?
12. What stirring vision did the apostle John experience, and what is the living reality of it all?
13. What sets Jehovah's people apart from the world?
14, 15. (a) What is one way that God has helped us to have a place in his divine purpose regarding his name and Kingdom? (b) How is the Kingdom set up in 1914 C.E. different from the one overturned in 607 B.C.E.?

kingdom was overturned, and beginning in 607 B.C.E., Jerusalem was completely subjected to the rule of Gentile world powers. The new Kingdom that Jehovah set up in 1914 is a heavenly power that will never be subject to anyone but Jehovah, nor will it be brought to ruin. (Daniel 2:44) Also, its rulership is different. How? Revelation 11: 15 answers: "Loud voices occurred in heaven, saying: 'The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord *and of his Christ,* and he will rule as king forever and ever.'"

15 "The kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" exercises authority over the entire world of mankind. This new expression of Jehovah's sovereignty, which includes his Messianic Son and Jesus' 144,000 brothers, most of whom are now resurrected to heavenly glory, is not of merely academic interest—something theoretical that students might like to discuss. No, this heavenly Kingdom is a real government. And our happy prospect of living forever in perfection as a result of its rule gives us ample reason to continue rejoicing. Being entrusted with such truths of Jehovah's Word moves us always to speak well of it. (Psalm 56:10) Are you regularly doing this by telling everyone that God's Messianic Kingdom is now ruling in the heavens?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What makes Jehovah's people distinctive, unique?
- ☐ Why are Jehovah's servants so joyful?
- ☐ What sets us apart from the world?
- ☐ In what three ways has God helped us to have a place in his divine purpose?

Helped by Holy Spirit and a Worldwide Brotherhood

16 A second way that God has helped us to have a place in his divine purpose is by giving us his holy spirit, which enables us to produce its beautiful fruitage in our lives and gain his approval. (Galatians 5: 22, 23) Furthermore, Paul wrote to anointed Christians: "We received . . . the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been kindly given us by God." (1 Corinthians 2:12) By our responding to Jehovah's spirit, all of us can now know and understand the present good things he has kindly given us—his promises, laws, principles, and so forth.—Compare Matthew 13:11.

17 As for the third way that God is helping us, we have our worldwide brotherhood and Jehovah's delightful organizational arrangement for worship. The apostle Peter spoke of it when he exhorted us to "have love for the whole association of brothers." (1 Peter 2:17) Our loving, international family of brothers and sisters helps us to serve Jehovah with great joy of heart, as Psalm 100:2 commands: "Serve Jehovah with rejoicing. Come in before him with a joyful cry." Verse 4 says further: "Come into his gates with thanksgiving, into his courtyards with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name." So whether we are preaching publicly or attending our meetings, we can experience joy. What peace and security we have found in the beautiful courtyards of Jehovah's spiritual temple!

16, 17. What are the second and third ways that God has helped us to have a place in his divine purpose?

Joyfully Praise Jehovah!

[18] No matter what difficult circumstances, persecution, or other problems may beset us, let us rejoice that we are in Jehovah's house of worship. (Isaiah 2:2, 3) Remember that joy is a quality of the heart. Our early Christian brothers and sisters were joyful praisers of Jehovah despite the many hardships and losses they experienced. (Hebrews 10:34) Our fellow believers today are just like them.—Matthew 5:10-12.

[19] All of us who serve Jehovah delight to obey the Bible's injunctions to praise him. Repeatedly the book of Revelation punctuates God's praises with the expression "Praise Jah!" (Revelation 19:1-6) In the six verses of Psalm 150, we are told 13 times to praise Jehovah. This is a universal appeal to all creation to join in joyfully singing Jehovah's praise. Our eternal life depends on our joining in this great Hallelujah chorus! Yes, the only people who will live forever are those who render unceasing praise to Jehovah. Therefore, we are determined to stick closely to his loyal worldwide congregation as the end draws near. Then, we can hope to see the closing words of Psalm 150 completely fulfilled: "Every breathing thing—let it praise Jah. Praise Jah, you people!"

18. Why can we rejoice in praising Jehovah despite persecution or other problems that beset us?

19. (a) What repeated injunctions stir us to praise Jehovah? (b) Our eternal lives depend on what, and what is our determination?

ANNUAL MEETING OCTOBER 4, 1997

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 4, 1997, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:15 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

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

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

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

A LIFE I HAVE NEVER REGRETTED

AS TOLD BY PAUL OBRIST

In 1912, when I was six, Mother died while giving birth to her fifth child. About two years later, a young housekeeper, Berta Weibel, started caring for our family. When Father married her the following year, we children were happy to have a mother again.

WE LIVED in Brugg, a small town in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Berta was truly a Christian person, and I liked her very much. She had started studying the publications of the Bible Students (Jehovah's Witnesses) in 1908, and she would share with others what she learned.

In 1915, soon after Berta and Father were married, I went with her to a showing of the "Photo-Drama of Creation." This slide and film presentation of the International Association of Earnest Bible Students left a deep impression on my mind and heart. Others were also impressed. The hall in Brugg was so full that the police closed the doors and turned away further arrivals. Many then tried to gain entrance through an open window by means of a ladder, and a few succeeded.

Mother's Fine Example

World War I was then raging in Europe, and people were fearful about the future. Thus, to call from house to house with the comforting message of God's Kingdom, as Mother did, was a noble task. Sometimes she let me accompany her, and I greatly enjoyed this. In 1918, Mother was finally able to symbolize her dedication to Jehovah God by water baptism.

Father had not interfered with Mother's worship until her baptism, but then he began to oppose her. One day he seized her Bible literature and threw it in the stove. Mother was able to snatch only her Bible from the fire. But what she did next was astounding. She went to Father and hugged him. She did not harbor any resentment toward him.

Totally surprised, Father calmed down. However, from time to time, his opposition

flared up, and we had to put up with his outbursts.

Employment and Spiritual Progress

In 1924, after completing a three-year apprenticeship as a hairdresser, I left home and found employment in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. This provided opportunity to improve my knowledge of the French language. Although the move hampered my spiritual progress somewhat, I never lost my love of Bible truth. So when I returned home six years later, I began attending the meetings of the Christian congregation in Brugg.

Shortly afterward I moved to Rheinfelden, a small town about 25 miles away. I worked there in my sister's hairdresser shop and continued my spiritual progress by meeting with a small group of Bible Students. When concluding our midweek Bible study one day, Brother Soder, the elder in charge, asked: "Who plans to participate in the field ministry Sunday?" I volunteered, assuming I would accompany someone and be shown how to do the work.

When Sunday arrived and we reached our territory, Brother Soder said, "Mr. Obrist will work over there." Though my heartbeat accelerated as never before, I began calling on people in their homes and talking to them about God's Kingdom. (Acts 20:20) From that time on, I never wavered in carrying on the preaching work that Jesus said must be accomplished before the end of this system of things would come. (Matthew 24:14) On March 4, 1934, when I was 28 years old, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah God by water baptism.

Two years later I found work as a hairdresser in Lugano, a city in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. I immediately began preaching the good news there, even though I knew little Italian. Still, during my first Sunday in the ministry, I placed the 20 booklets I had taken along. In time, I was able to gather a few interested persons to form a group to study *The Watchtower*. Eventually a number of these were baptized, and in February 1937 we formed a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Lugano.

Two months later, in April 1937, I received a letter that dramatically changed my life. It was an invitation to serve at Bethel, as the branch facilities of Jehovah's Witnesses in a country are called. I immediately accepted the invitation—a decision I've never regretted. Thus I began what has become a 60-year career in the full-time ministry.

Bethel Service in Troublous Times

At that time the Swiss Bethel was located in the city of Bern, the capital of Switzerland. There we printed books, booklets, and magazines in 14 languages, and these were shipped all over Europe. On occasion, I took the printed literature to the train station by wheelbarrow, since in those days we did not always have a van at our disposal. My first assignment at Bethel was in the Composition Department, where we assembled the lead type from which the printing was done. Soon I began working at the reception desk, and, of course, I also served as the barber for the Bethel family.

In September 1939, World War II broke out, and the Nazi onslaught spread terror throughout Europe. Switzerland was a neutral country in the center of the warring nations. Initially, we continued our Christian activity without interference. Then, on July 5, 1940, at two o'clock in the afternoon, while I was at my desk in the lobby, a civilian appeared, accompanied by a soldier carrying a rifle with a mounted bayonet.

"Where is Zürcher?" the civilian barked. Franz Zürcher at the time was the branch overseer of our preaching work in Switzerland.

"Whom may I announce?" I asked. Immediately they grabbed me and dragged me up the stairs, demanding that I take them to Zürcher's office.

The entire Bethel family—we were about 40 then—was ordered to assemble in the dining room. Four machine guns were positioned outside the building to discourage anyone from trying to escape. Inside, about 50 soldiers began searching the building. Contrary to expectations, no evidence was found that Jehovah's Witnesses were involved in promoting resistance to military service. Still, large quantities of literature were confiscated and taken away in five army trucks.

When we refused to allow *The Watchtower* to be censored by government authorities, its publication was discontinued in Switzerland. This meant that fewer personnel were needed for the work at Bethel, and younger members of the family were encouraged to leave and become pioneers, as Jehovah's Witnesses who engage in the full-time preaching work are called.

Pioneering During Wartime

In July 1940, I returned to the Italian-speaking area of Switzerland near Lugano, where I had lived before coming to Bethel. This staunch Catholic territory, which by then was also under the strong influence of Fascism, became my pioneer assignment.

Rarely did a day go by without my being stopped by the police who demanded that I give up my preaching activity. One day while I was talking to a woman at a garden gate, a man in civilian clothes grabbed me from behind, led me to a patrol car, and drove me to Lugano. There he handed me over to the police. When I was questioned, I explained that Jehovah God had commanded us to preach.

"Here on earth, *we* are the ones commanding," the officer answered presumptuously. "God may command in heaven!"

During the war, it was especially vital that we heed Jesus' counsel to be "cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16) Thus, I hid most of my literature in the inside pockets of my shirt. And to be sure that I would not lose anything, I wore knickerbockers that were tightly gathered below the knees.

In time, I received instructions to move to the valley of Engadine, where the cat-and-mouse game with the police continued. This is a beautiful valley in the eastern Swiss Alps, which in wintertime is buried below masses of snow, so I had my skis sent to me to help me get around in the territory.

Warm gloves are vital when traveling by skis during a cold winter. Because of constant use, mine soon began to wear out. How grateful I was one day to receive an altogether unexpected parcel by mail containing a hand-knitted pullover as well as warm gloves! A Christian sister in my for-

In Our Next Issue

How Do You View Sin?

Are You Pursuing Virtue?

Save Your Child's Life!

mer congregation in Bern had made them for me. Even now when I think about it, I am moved with thankfulness.

Many Joyous Privileges

In 1943, conditions in Switzerland began to stabilize, and I was called back to serve at Bethel. Because of certain problems in the French-speaking congregation in Lausanne, about 60 miles away, I was assigned to visit that city regularly to help the publishers get a proper view of God's organization.

Later I served for a time as circuit overseer for all the French congregations in Switzerland. Early in the week, I worked at Bethel, but I spent Friday, Saturday, and Sunday visiting a different congregation each week in an effort to be of spiritual assistance. In addition, when a French-speaking congregation was formed in Bern in 1960, I became its presiding overseer. I served in this capacity until 1970, when Bethel was moved from Bern to its present beautiful location in the town of Thun.

I was happy to find a small group of Italian-speaking Witnesses in Thun, and I began working with them. In time a congregation was formed, and I served as its presiding overseer for a number of years until younger brothers became qualified to shoulder that responsibility.

What I have considered an especially joyous privilege is attending international conventions of Jehovah's people. For example, in 1950 there was the memorable Theocracy's Increase Assembly at Yankee Stadium, New York. Visiting the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York, left a lasting impression on me. I will also never forget Brother Milton G. Henschel's talk the following year at the Clean Worship Assembly in London, England, that highlighted Jesus' words, "I tell you, If these remained silent, the stones would cry out." (Luke 19:40) Brother Henschel asked, "Do you think the stones will have to cry out?" I can still hear in my ears the roaring, "No!" that came from tens of thousands of voices.

Working at Bethel

When I went to Bethel back in 1937, my father, who learned that we received only a small allowance, worriedly asked, "Son, how will you survive in old age?" I answered by quoting the psalmist David's words: "I have not seen anyone righteous left entirely, nor his offspring looking for bread." (Psalm 37:25) These words have certainly been fulfilled in my case.

How happy I am that over 80 years ago, Berta Weibel married Father and that by means of her example and guidance I came to know Jehovah and his qualities! Although other members of the family scoffed at her, she faithfully served Jehovah down to the time of her death in 1983. She never expressed regret at having served her God, Jehovah; neither have I ever regretted staying single and devoting my life wholly to Jehovah's service.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Breaking Free From Demon Influence

THE practice of spiritism has long dominated the lives of millions of people. But it is possible to break free! That is what happened with many in the ancient city of Ephesus. According to the Bible account, "quite a number of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them up . . . Thus in a mighty way the word of Jehovah kept growing and prevailing."—Acts 19:19, 20.

The Christian congregation today is likewise experiencing growth. As was the case in Ephesus, among those becoming believers are ones who previously practiced demonism. The following experience from Zimbabwe illustrates this.

Gogo (Grandmother) Mthupha was well-known for her spiritistic powers. People came from as far away as Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa for her to treat them with her bush medicine. Gogo Mthupha also taught others how to be a *n'anga*, or witch doctor. And sometimes she would cast spells!

One Sunday morning Gogo Mthupha was visited by Jehovah's Witnesses who were engaged in the house-to-house ministry. She thoroughly enjoyed a discussion with them about the Bible's promise of a new world of righteousness, a world free of all wicked influences. She accepted the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* and agreed to have a home Bible study.* After only three studies, she started attending meetings.

Through her study of the Bible, Gogo Mthupha learned that her special powers came from wicked spirit creatures who had rebelled against Jehovah's sovereignty. (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) She also learned that these demons are determined to turn everyone they can against Jehovah and against pure worship. Since her livelihood depended upon conjuring these wicked spirit creatures, what would she do?

Gogo Mthupha expressed the desire to get rid of all her charms and spiritistic paraphernalia. This included her special headdress and "talking bull horns," which she used in her *n'anga* healings. Gogo Mthupha wanted to get rid of all such items so that she could serve the only true and living God, Jehovah.

Some of her relatives, though, objected because she supported them financially. They begged her to transfer the articles to them, along with her uncanny powers so that they could continue to profit. Gogo Mthupha refused.

With the help of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, she collected three large bags of spiritistic equipment and burned all of it. As flames engulfed her instruments of demon worship, Gogo Mthupha *exclaimed:* "Look! That horn, it can't save itself."

In time, Gogo Mthupha joyfully symbolized her dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. How does she make a living now? By selling vegetables. Yes, through the power of God's Word, one can break free from demon worship. Says Gogo Mthupha: "I have never felt so free."

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

Are You God's Friend?
what your prayers reveal

HAVE you ever accidentally overheard two people conversing? No doubt it did not take you long to determine the nature of their relationship —whether they were intimates or strangers, mere acquaintances or close, trusting friends. In a similar way, our prayers can reveal our relationship with God.

The Bible assures us that God "is not far off from each one of us." (Acts 17: 27) Indeed, he invites us to know him. We can even be his friends. (Psalm 34:8; James 2:23) We can enjoy real intimacy with him! (Psalm 25:14) Clearly, our relationship with God is the most precious thing we imperfect humans could possibly possess. And Jehovah treasures our friendship. This is evident because our friendship with him is based on our faith in his only-begotten Son, who gave his life in our behalf.—Colossians 1:19, 20.

Our prayers should therefore reflect deep love and appreciation for Jehovah. Have you ever felt, though, that your prayers, while reverent, are somewhat lacking in real depth of feeling? This is not uncommon. The key to improving matters? Nurturing your friendship with Jehovah God.

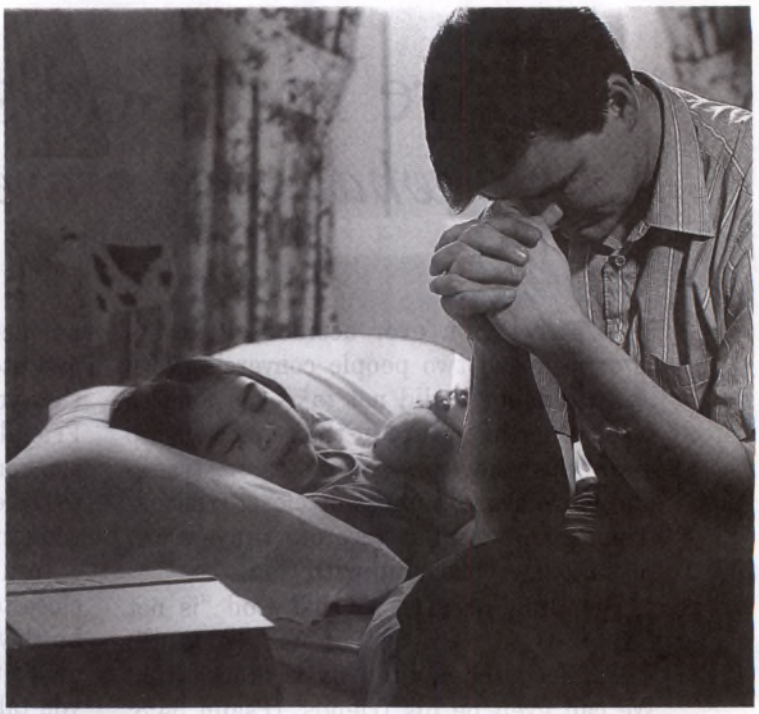
Finding Time for Prayer

First of all, it takes time to nurture and cultivate a friendship. You may daily greet or even converse with any number of people—neighbors, coworkers, bus drivers, and store clerks. Still, this hardly means that you are really friends with such ones. Friendship grows as you talk at length with someone, moving from superficial chatter to the expression of your inner feelings and thoughts.

In a similar way, prayer helps us draw close to Jehovah. But adequate time must be devoted to it; more is needed than a quick thank-you at mealtimes. The more you talk to Jehovah, the more you are able to sort out your own feelings, motives, and actions. Solutions to difficult problems begin to manifest themselves as God's spirit calls to mind principles from his Word. (Psalm 143:10; John 14:26) Further, as you pray, Jehovah becomes more real to you, and you become more aware of his loving interest in and concern for you.

This is especially so when you experience an answer to your prayers. Why, Jehovah can "do more than superabundantly beyond all the things we ask or conceive"! (Ephesians 3:20) This does not mean that God performs miracles in your behalf. However, through his written Word, publications of the faithful slave class, or the mouths of loving brothers and sisters, he may provide you with needed advice or direction. Or he may give you the strength needed to endure or resist a temptation. (Matthew 24: 45; 2 Timothy 4:17) Such experiences fill

We can pray to God throughout the day as the opportunity arises



our hearts with appreciation for our heavenly Friend!

One must therefore make time for prayer. True, time is in short supply during these stressful days. But when you really care about someone, you usually find time to spend with that one. Note the way that the psalmist expressed himself: "As the hind that longs for the water streams, so my very soul longs for you, O God. My soul indeed thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1, 2) Do you have a similar longing to talk to God? Then buy out the time to do so!—Compare Ephesians 5:16.

For example, you might try rising early in the morning in order to have some private time to pray. (Psalm 119:147) Do you sometimes experience sleepless nights? Then, like the psalmist, you can view such troubling times as an opportunity to express your concerns to God. (Psalm 63:6) Or it may simply be a matter of offering several brief prayers during the day. The psalmist said to God: "To you I keep calling all day long."—Psalm 86:3.

Improving the Quality of Our Prayers

At times you will also find it helpful to increase the length of your prayers. During a brief prayer, you may tend to speak about superficial issues. But when you utter longer and deeper prayers, you more readily express your thoughts and inner feelings. Jesus at least once spent the entire night in prayer. (Luke 6:12) No doubt you will find that your own prayers become more intimate and meaningful if you avoid rushing them.

This does not mean rambling on when you have little to say; nor does it mean resorting to meaningless repetition. Jesus warned: "When praying, do not say the same things over and over again, just as the people of the nations do, for they imagine they will get a hearing for their use of many words. So, do not make yourselves like them, for God your Father knows what things you are needing before ever you ask him."—Matthew 6:7, 8.

Prayer is more meaningful when you give thought in advance to what subjects you want to discuss. The possibilities are endless—our joys in the ministry, our weaknesses and failings, our disappointments, our economic concerns, the pressures at work or in school, the welfare of our families, and the spiritual condition of our local congregation, to name just a few.

Does your mind sometimes tend to drift when you pray? Then put forth more effort to concentrate. After all, Jehovah is willing to 'pay attention to our entreaties.' (Psalm 17:1) Should we not be willing to put forth earnest effort to pay attention to our own prayers? Yes, 'set your mind on the things of the spirit,' and refuse to let it wander. —Romans 8:5.

The manner in which we address Jehovah is also important. Though he wants us to view him as a friend, we must never forget that we are talking to the Sovereign of the universe. Read and meditate on the awe-inspiring scene portrayed at Revelation chapters 4 and 5. There John saw in a vision the magnificence of the One whom we approach in prayer. What a privilege we have to be able to approach and gain access to "the One seated upon the throne"! Never do we want our language to become overly familiar or undignified. Rather, we should put forth concerted effort to make 'the sayings of our mouth and the meditation of our heart pleasurable to Jehovah.'—Psalm 19:14.

Realize, though, that we do not impress Jehovah with eloquent speech. He is pleased by our respectful, heartfelt expressions, no matter how simply they are expressed.—Psalm 62:8.

Comfort and Understanding in Times of Need

When we need help and comfort, we often turn to a close friend for support and sympathy. Well, no friend is more easily accessible than Jehovah. He is "a help that is readily to be found during distresses." (Psalm 46:1) As "the God of all comfort," he understands what we are going through better than anyone else. (2 Corinthians 1: 3, 4; Psalm 5:1; 31:7) And he has real empathy and compassion for those in dire straits. (Isaiah 63:9; Luke 1:77, 78) Perceiving Jehovah to be an understanding friend, we feel free to talk to him fervently, intensely. We are moved to express our deepest fears and anxieties. Thus we experience firsthand how Jehovah's 'own consolations begin to fondle our soul.'—Psalm 94:18, 19.

Sometimes we may feel unworthy to approach God because of our errors. But what if a close friend of yours erred against you and begged for forgiveness? Would you not be moved to console and reassure that one? Why, then, should you expect any less of Jehovah? He generously forgives his friends who sin as a result of human imperfection. (Psalm 86:5; 103:3, 8-11) Knowing this, we do not hold back from freely confessing our errors to him; we can be confident of his love and mercy. (Psalm 51:17) If we are depressed because of our shortcomings, we can take comfort in the words of 1 John 3:19, 20: "By this we shall know that we originate with the truth, and

we shall assure our hearts before him as regards whatever our hearts may condemn us in, because God is greater than our hearts and knows all things."

We do not need to be in dire straits, however, to enjoy God's loving concern. Jehovah is interested in anything that might affect our spiritual and emotional welfare. Yes, never do we need to think that our feelings, thoughts, and concerns are too trivial to be mentioned in prayer. (Philippians 4:6) When you are with a close friend, do you only discuss the big events in your life? Do you not also share relatively minor concerns? In a similar way, you can feel free to talk about any facet of your life with Jehovah, knowing that "he cares for you."—1 Peter 5:7.

Of course, a friendship is not likely to last long if all you talk about is yourself. Likewise, our prayers should not be self-centered. We should also express our love and concern for Jehovah and his interests. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Prayer is not only an opportunity to request help from God but also a chance to utter thanks and praise. (Psalm 34:1; 95:2) "Taking in knowledge" through regular personal study will aid us in this regard, as it helps us become better acquainted with Jehovah and his ways. (John 17:3) You may find it particularly helpful to read the book of Psalms and note how other faithful servants expressed themselves to Jehovah.

Jehovah's friendship is indeed a precious gift. May we show that we appreciate it by making our prayers even more intimate, heartfelt, and personal. Then we will enjoy the happiness expressed by the psalmist, who declared: "Happy is the one you choose and cause to approach."—Psalm 65:4.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

We were thrilled with our study of Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. In view of the new understanding presented in "The Watchtower" of October 15, 1995, can we still say that Jehovah's Witnesses today are sharing in a separating work?

Yes. Understandably, many have wondered about this because Matthew 25:31, 32 says: "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1995, showed why these verses apply after the great tribulation begins. Jesus will arrive in his glory with his angels and will sit on his judgment throne. Then, he will separate people. In what sense? He will render decisions based on what people did or did not do before that time.

We can compare this to the development of a legal process leading up to a court case. The evidence builds up over an extended period before the court rules and hands down a sentence. The evidence as to whether people now alive will turn out to be sheep or goats has been accumulating for a long time. And it is still coming in. But when Jesus sits on his throne, the case will be complete. He will be ready to render judgment. People will be separated either to everlasting cutting-off or to everlasting life.

However, the fact that the separation of people to life or to death mentioned at Matthew 25:32 is yet future does not mean that no separating, or dividing, occurs before that. The Bible, in Matthew chapter 13, mentions one separation work that occurs earlier. Interestingly, the book *United in Worship of the Only True God,* pages 179-80, treats this under the heading "Separating of People".* The book says: "There are also other significant events that Jesus prominently associated with the conclusion of the system of things. One of these is the *separation* of the 'sons of the kingdom' from the 'sons of the wicked one.' Jesus spoke of this in his parable about a wheat field that an enemy oversowed with weeds."

The book was referring to Jesus' illustration set out at Matthew 13:24-30 and explained in verses 36-43. Note in verse 38 that the fine seeds of wheat represent the sons of the Kingdom, but the weeds stand for the sons of the wicked one. Verses 39 and 40 show that in the 'conclusion of the system of things'—during the time in which we now live—the weeds are collected. They are separated out and finally burned, destroyed.

The illustration deals with anointed Christians (who in the parable of the sheep and the goats are called Jesus' brothers). Still, the point is clear that a vital separation does occur during our time, with the anointed being distinguished from those who profess to be Christians but who prove themselves to be "sons of the wicked one."

Jesus provided other examples of people being divided, or separated. Recall that he said concerning the broad road that leads to destruction: "Many *are* the ones going in through it." (Matthew 7:13) That was not a comment just about the final outcome. It was a comment about an ongoing development, just as is true now of the few finding the cramped road leading off into life. Recall, too, that when sending out the apostles, Jesus said that they would find some who would be deserving. Others would not be deserving, and the apostles were to shake the dust off their feet "for a witness against" such people. (Luke 9:5) Is it not true that something similar happens as Christians carry on their public ministry today? Some respond well, whereas others reject the divine message that we are bringing.

The articles in *The Watchtower* dealing with the sheep and the goats noted: "While the judging as described in the parable is in the near future, even *now* something vital is taking place. We Christians are engaged in a lifesaving work of proclaiming a message that causes a division among people. (Matthew 10:32-39)." In that passage in Matthew chapter 10, we read that Jesus said that following him would be a cause for division—father against son, daughter against mother.

Finally, Christ's spirit-anointed brothers have spearheaded the worldwide preaching of the Kingdom message. As people hear it and react favorably or unfavorably, they are identifying themselves. We humans cannot, *and we should not,* say, 'This person is a sheep; that one a goat,' in the sense conveyed in Matthew chapter 25. Still, our exposing people to the good news allows them to show where they stand —what they are and how they react to Jesus' brothers. Hence, like mounting evidence for a court case, the division between those who support Jesus' brothers and those who refuse to support them is becoming evident. (Malachi 3:18) As *The Watchtower* showed, Jesus will soon sit on his throne and pronounce sentence, people being judicially separated in a final sense to life or to cutting-off.

* Published in 1983 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

When Jehovah's Witnesses Call

What should Catholics do when one of Jehovah's Witnesses calls at their home? A recent publication prepared by the National Catechistic Bureau of the Italian Bishops' Conference states: "Refusing a conversation, kindly but nonetheless firmly, is not in this case a lack of charity."

Not all Catholics agree, as shown by a letter sent to the daily *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* by a man living in Foggia, Italy:

"I am not one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I am a Catholic. But I am amazed by certain rules the church imposes upon the faithful, telling them to stick notices on their doors sending Jehovah's Witnesses away. These people, after all, are simply carrying God's Word, and they help others to have a deeper knowledge of the Bible. I am reminded of the time when Italy was struck by cholera and we were given advice on how to avoid infection.

"In my opinion, this shows that the church dictates her own rules without taking into consideration the wishes of the faithful. But for some years now, I have seen that even Catholics are going from house to house, visiting homes of Jehovah's Witnesses too; and they let them in, conversing with them, without rejecting anybody."

Jehovah's Witnesses do not force people to accept their message. Rather, they endeavor to share with others the hope held out in God's Word that they themselves have found to be comforting in these troubled times. By going from house to house, as well as by speaking with those whom they meet on the street, Jehovah's Witnesses share the good news of God's Kingdom with those who are willing to listen.—Matthew 24:14; Acts 5:42; 17:17.