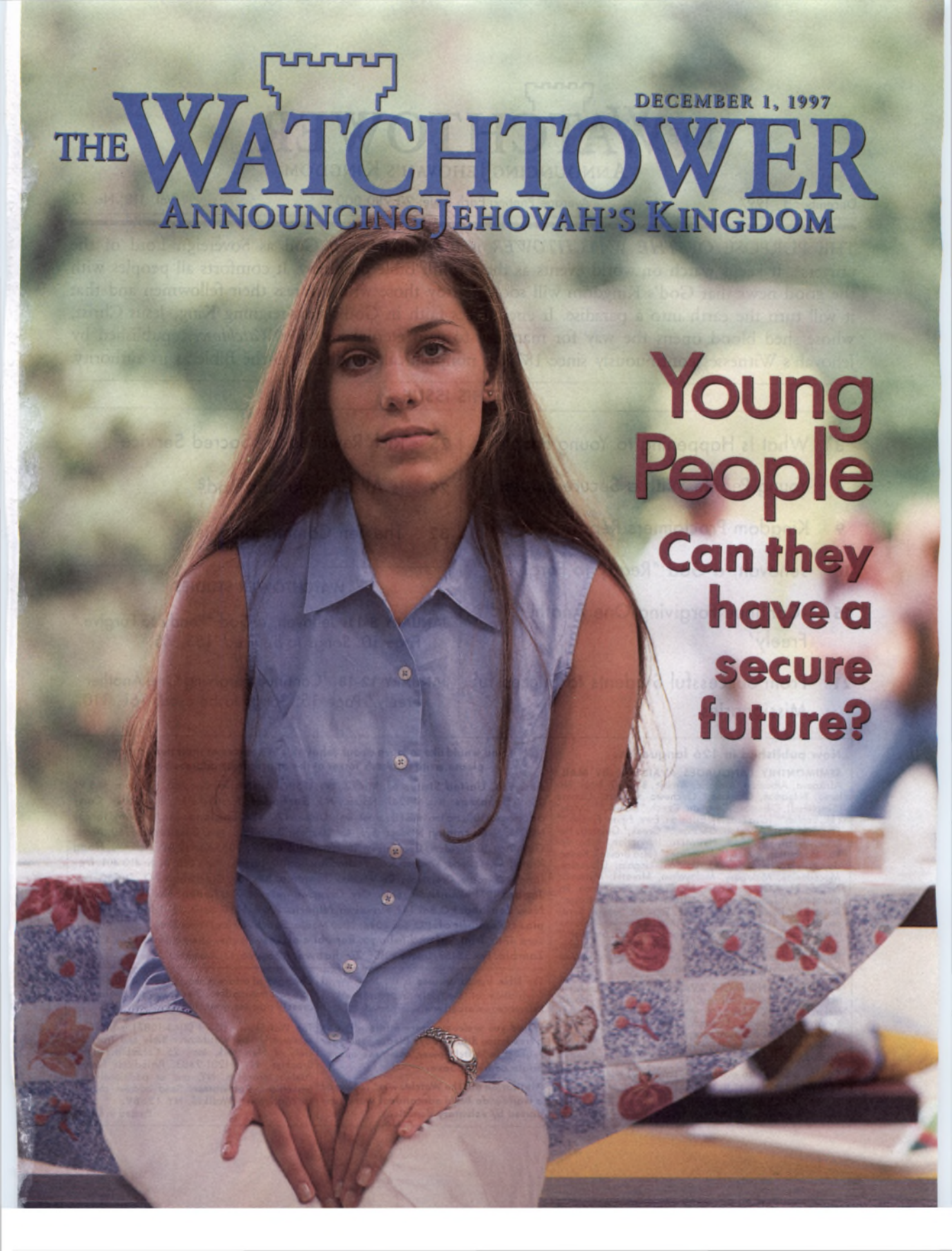




DECEMBER 1, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**Young
People
Can they
have a
secure
future?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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What is happening to young people?

THE good news or the bad news—which do you want to hear first? When asked this question, many opt to absorb the bad news first in hopes that the good news will linger in the mind.

When we examine what is happening to young people, consider first the present state. Older people generally comment that young people today are not like youths of the past. Young people, on the other hand, resent any implication that they do not measure up to the standards of yesteryear. Nevertheless, keen observers of humanity agree that today's youths are different.

How Different?

Although people in general believe that young people should have good manners, a sense of responsibility, and respect for others, reality often falls far short of these ideals. According to a survey published in *The Independent* newspaper of London, young people are “developing a ‘new spirit of rebellion’ against a world which they see as having largely failed them.” This “new spirit of rebellion” is reflected in the find-

ing that fewer modern-day youths want to regard themselves as “sensible and responsible.” They would rather be regarded as “wild and unpredictable.”

In Britain, for example, recorded crime—most of which was committed by young people—increased tenfold between 1950 and 1993. Increased drug and alcohol abuse parallels the trend. At the same time, notes *The Times* of London, almost all developed countries have seen “substantial increases in psychosocial disorders among youth since the Second World War.” According to David J. Smith, professor of criminology, these disorders are “not related to deprivation or to increasing affluence in any simple way.” Research indicates that a greater distinction is now evident between young people and older ones.

Children and young teenagers today face increasing stress. Cases of suicide, attempted or successful, have become commonplace. Suicide attempts by children under 12 doubled in less than ten years, reports Scotland's *Glasgow Herald*. Older children allow despair to lead them the same way.



"They are the extreme end of a rising tide of psychiatric problems in the young that threaten to outstrip the services being put in place to help them," comments the newspaper.

Who Is to Blame?

Adults find it easy to blame young people for youth's "deviant" views. Yet, in all truthfulness, do not adults carry much of the blame for what is now happening among young people? Bullying, parental neglect, lack of role models whom youths can trust, are often cited in explanation. "Depression in the general population is no more common than it was 30 years ago," claims Professor Sir Michael Rutter, head of Britain's Medical Research Council Child Psychiatry Unit. "But," he adds, "its incidence among

teenagers and young adults has increased greatly. . . . There is no doubt that family breakdown plays a part; not just divorce, but the general levels of discord and conflict among adults."

One researcher claims that young people are "rejecting conventionality." Why? "Because the conventions are not there for them." Take the changing views of gender roles as an example. Many young women adopt the more masculine traits of aggression and violence, while young men become feminized. How different from the norms of the past!

But why do we see such radical changes now? And what good news is there about young people today? How can they have a secure future? Our next article considers the answers to these questions.

Young people with a secure future

"A SHORRIFYING and revolting as any [rape case] could be"—that was how the judge presiding over a recent trial described the crime. A gang of eight teenagers, ranging in age from 14 to 18, waylaid a female tourist in an inner-city area of London, subjected her to repeated sexual attacks, and then flung her into a nearby canal although she said she could not swim. Understandably, the mother of one of the teenagers declared that she felt sick when she saw the TV news report of what her son had done.

Sadly, this incident reflects what is happening in society today. Brutality has be-

come the norm, whether in criminal activity, domestic strife, or the ethnic conflicts of the Balkans, central and western Africa, and elsewhere. Young people grow up amid such conditions, or they often hear about them. It is little wonder, then, that many develop a hard exterior, show "no natural affection," and are "without self-control." —2 Timothy 3:3.

"Fierce"

When the Christian apostle Paul penned his second letter to his fellow elder Timothy, Rome was the dominant world power. Cruelty and savagery were rife in the Roman arenas. Yet, Paul warned that in the future,

times would become "hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) Interestingly, the Greek word that describes these times as being "hard to deal with" includes the thought of their being "fierce." An incident during Jesus' earthly ministry more than 30 years earlier shows what was behind some of the ferocity in his time.

Jesus had just arrived by boat at the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. As he stepped ashore, two men confronted him. Their wild appearance and screaming made it plain that something was radically wrong with them. They were "unusually fierce," in fact, demon-possessed.* What they cried out issued from the wicked spirits that controlled their violent actions. "What have we to do with you, Son of God?" the men screamed. "Did you come here to torment us before the appointed time?" The wicked spirits that possessed the two knew full well that God had already fixed a time for executing his judgment on the demons. This would mean their everlasting destruction. But until then they were going to exercise their superhuman abilities to provoke fierce violence. Only Jesus' miraculous action to expel those demons brought relief to the two men.—Matthew 8:28-32; Jude 6.

When people today, including youths, act in a crazed way, we do well to recall that incident. Why? Because in this 20th century, we face a related danger, as the Bible's last book, Revelation, explains: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." (Revelation 12:12) Observe, please, that this humiliation for Satan is accompanied by "great anger" because he knows that his time is short.

* "Fierce" translates the same Greek word used at Matthew 8:28 and at 2 Timothy 3:1.

Under Attack

As mentioned often in the pages of this journal, the year 1914 saw the enthronement of Christ Jesus as King of God's Kingdom in heaven. Jesus immediately took action against God's chief enemy, Satan. Thus, the Devil and his demons have been banished from heaven, and they now concentrate their attention on this earth. (Revelation 12:7-9) With his sphere of influence greatly restricted, Satan "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (1 Peter 5:8) Who are easy prey for him? Is it not understandable that it would particularly be those who lack experience in life and human relationships? Young people today have thus become targets of the Devil. Through much of their music and leisure pursuits, they play right into the hands of this unseen wily manipulator.—Ephesians 6:11, 12.

Even when young people try to make something of their lives, they find themselves at a disadvantage. Since the end of World War II, people in many of the countries previously at war have tried to compensate by offering their families an affluent life-style. Material possessions, unrestrained leisure, and entertainment have become major goals. As a consequence, many have suffered. "Those who are determined to be rich," Paul warned Timothy, "fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires . . . For the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have . . . stabbed themselves all over with many pains." (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) By and large, we find the people of today's materialistic society stabbed with economic, financial, and emotional pains. Among them are many young ones, victims of this ploy of God's archenemy.

Happily, though, there is good news. And it concerns young people, those who have before them a secure future. How can this be?

Seek and You Will Find

Many young people have high ideals. They reject the deteriorating standards common among adults. They recoil at the injustice and callous attitude of power-hungry politicians and businessmen. If you are young, perhaps this is how you feel.

Consider Cedric, a young man in his late teens, whose experience is by no means unique.* As a child, he had many fears, including a fear of death. He wondered what purpose there is to life. Not finding answers to his questions by the time he was 15, he resigned himself to musing about life in the company of other idealistic youngsters. "We'd smoke dope and sit around talking for hours on end," he recalls. "You felt everybody thought the same as you, but nobody had the answers."

Cedric, like many young people, craved excitement. Simply taking drugs did not satisfy him. He soon became involved in stealing and trafficking in drugs. Still he sought new challenges. He began stealing to order. "I got a kick out of it," he admits. "But I never took something from the common man. If I stole a car, I left it in good condition. If I burgled a business, I did so only where I knew they were covered by insurance. It helped me justify what I did." As you might expect, Cedric ended up in prison.

Cedric remembers: "Mark, a fellow prisoner, talked to me. Noticing that I have a large cross tattooed on my upper arm, he asked me why I had this. He thought it must be important to me religiously." A

couple of weeks later, Mark gave Cedric a copy of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*.* "'You Can Live Forever'—those few words struck me immediately. That's what we had always talked about, but we had never been able to get to the bottom of it." After many discussions with one of Jehovah's Witnesses who visited the prison, Cedric came to realize that what he aspired to was achievable—but only in God's way.

"Once I stopped associating with my former friends, I made rapid progress," Cedric notes. His progress in understanding and happiness has not been easy. "I am still working on it," he says. "I have to be careful about the way I think." Yes, Cedric now appreciates that being idealistic led him into a trap of the Devil, thinking that his goals could only be achieved by engaging in activities that center on excitement.

Happily, Cedric is long out of prison, and he enjoys regular fellowship with others who have found what they were searching for. He is now one of Jehovah's Witnesses and shares their hope of living in Paradise here on earth. He also looks forward to the end of satanic influence in all its guises.

Of course, not only young people like Cedric have a secure future; others have been raised by godly parents, who instilled in their children a love of Bible truth.

Godly Training Pays Dividends

"Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it," wrote wise King Solomon of old. (Proverbs 22:6) This has proved true in the case of many single-minded youngsters who have chosen to follow the Bible's standard.

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

* Names have been changed.



Sheila, Gordon, and Sarah did this. They recall that their parents placed much importance on obedience to Christ's command to 'go and make disciples' by preaching the Kingdom good news. (Matthew 24:14; 28: 19, 20) "In any decisions that had to be made, Mother and I used to say to each other, 'How will it affect the preaching work?'" recalls Sheila. "We gave up many projects as a result of this reasoning," she admits, adding, "but what blessings we had!" Even at the end of long days spent visiting the homes of people with the good news, Sheila and her mother trudged home singing. "My joy was full," she says. "I can feel it now."

Gordon remembers many an enjoyable Saturday evening. "I was invited to the homes of the elders of the congregation, where we had profitable quizzes and dis-

Wicked spirits were behind the "unusually fierce" men that Jesus healed

cussions. We were encouraged to memorize verses from the Bible, talk freely on Scriptural subjects, relate an experience of preaching, and learn how the Kingdom work was expanding," Gordon recalls. "All these things helped me to lay a good foundation and to cultivate love for Jehovah God."

Sarah has happy memories of evenings spent with visiting Witnesses. "We would have a meal together. Then to finish off the day, we played the piano, accompanying those singing songs about God's Kingdom. Music really helped us a great deal, especially during our school years, because it allowed us to do things together as a family."



Building "a fine foundation for the future"

Of course, not all young people who seek to please Jehovah have ideal family circumstances. However, close association with other Witness families in the congregation offers them security and a sense of belonging.

Treasure a Secure Foundation for the Future

Young people today have a choice. They can continue with this wicked world as it plunges headlong toward destruction in the coming "great tribulation" foretold by Jesus. Or they can "set their confidence in God himself and . . . observe his own commandments," as the inspired psalmist Asaph sang. Obedience to God will prevent them from becoming "a generation stubborn and

rebellious, a generation who had not prepared their heart and whose spirit was not trustworthy with God."—Matthew 24:21; Psalm 78:6-8.

In the more than 80,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide, you will find many young people whom you can admire. They have heeded Paul's advice to young Timothy "to work at good, to be rich in fine works, to be liberal, ready to share, safely treasuring up for themselves a fine foundation for the future." As a result, they have now got "a firm hold on the real life." (1 Timothy 6:18, 19) Find out more about these genuine Christians by attending their meetings. Then you too can have the hope of a secure future.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Youths Praise God in the Democratic Republic of Congo

CENTURIES ago, the psalmist warmly invited young ones to join in praising the King of eternity: "You young men and also you virgins, you old men together with boys . . . , praise the name of Jehovah, for his name alone is unreachably high." (Psalm 148:12, 13) The following experiences from the Democratic Republic of Congo highlight this matchless privilege.

- The landlord of a special pioneer was favorably impressed by the conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses. He thus allowed the Witnesses to study the Bible with his five-year-old daughter, Fifi. After observing Fifi's progress in studying *My Book of Bible Stories*,* her father allowed her to attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall. There, little Fifi learned Kingdom songs from the Witnesses' songbook. She especially liked song number 4, entitled "God's Promise of Paradise."

One day Fifi's father decided to take her to his church. To everyone's surprise, Fifi refused to sing the church songs. Why? Because she felt that the songs sung in her father's church were not in harmony with what she had learned from her Bible study. Courageously, she sang her favorite Kingdom song instead.

After several unsuccessful attempts to change her mind, the church leaders decided to excommunicate five-year-old Fifi! Despite this ill-treatment, her father remained calm. He was proud that Fifi had taken a firm stand for what she believed. Fifi's father and mother both want her to continue associating with Jehovah's Witnesses.

- When a teenage boy named Lukodi decided to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, his father was very opposed. On one occasion when Lukodi was getting ready to go to a meeting at



the Kingdom Hall, his father threatened him with a machete. On another occasion Lukodi's father struck him with a stick, making a deep wound on his back. In spite of the intense opposition, Lukodi kept firm in his resolve to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He continued to make progress and got baptized. Now he serves as a regular pioneer.

Sona, Lukodi's younger sister, was so impressed by her brother's stand that she too began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. To prevent her from studying, however, their father sent Sona to school in another village, where there were no Witnesses. Nevertheless, Sona made it a habit to speak to others about the things she had learned. As a result, her cousin also became interested.

When the Witnesses from a neighboring village heard about Sona's preaching activity, they paid her a visit and arranged for her to have a regular home Bible study. She continued to make progress and soon joined her brother as a dedicated, baptized Witness of Jehovah. Additionally, her cousin is now an unbaptized publisher, and a book study is being held in this village.

How wonderful and refreshing it is when young ones join in praising the name of Jehovah!

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

JEHOVAH, A GOD “READY TO FORGIVE”

“You, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive.”—PSALM 86:5.

KING DAVID of ancient Israel knew how heavy the burden of a guilty conscience could be. He wrote: “My own errors have passed over my head; like a heavy load they are too heavy for me. I have grown numb and become crushed to an extreme degree; I have roared due to the groaning of my heart.” (Psalm 38:4, 8) David, however, found comfort for his troubled heart. He knew that while Jehovah hates sin, he does not hate the sinner—if that one is truly repentant and rejects his sinful course. (Psalm 32:5; 103:3) With full faith in Jehovah’s willingness to extend mercy to repentant ones, David said: “You, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive.”—Psalm 86:5.

² When we sin, we too may carry the crushing burden of a painful conscience as a result. This feeling of remorse is normal, even healthy. It can move us to take positive steps to correct our mistakes. Some Christians, though, have become overwhelmed by guilt. Their self-condemning heart might insist that God will not fully forgive them, no matter how repentant they are. “It is a terrible feeling when you think that Jehovah may not love you anymore,”

said one sister, reflecting on a mistake she had made. Even after she repented and accepted helpful counsel from congregation elders, she continued to feel unworthy of God’s forgiveness. She explains: “Not a day passes by when I don’t ask Jehovah for his forgiveness.” If we become “swallowed up” by guilt, Satan may try to get us to give up, to feel that we are not worthy of serving Jehovah.—2 Corinthians 2:5-7, 11.

³ But that is not at all how Jehovah views matters! His Word assures us that when we manifest genuine heartfelt repentance, Jehovah is willing, yes ready, to forgive. (Proverbs 28:13) So if God’s forgiveness has ever seemed unattainable to you, perhaps what is needed is a better understanding of why and how he forgives.

Why Is Jehovah “Ready to Forgive”?

⁴ We read: “As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us he has put our transgressions. As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him.” Why is Jehovah disposed to show mercy? The next verse answers: “For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:12-14) Yes, Jehovah does not forget that we are creatures of dust, having frailties, or weaknesses, as a result of imperfection. The expression that

4. What does Jehovah remember about our nature, and how does this affect the way he treats us?

1. What heavy burden did King David carry, and how did he find comfort for his troubled heart?
- 2, 3. (a) When we sin, what burden may we carry as a result, and why is this healthy? (b) What danger is there in getting “swallowed up” by guilt? (c) What assurance does the Bible give us about Jehovah’s willingness to forgive?

he knows "the formation of us" reminds us that the Bible likens Jehovah to a potter and us to the vessels he forms.* (Jeremiah 18:2-6) A potter handles his clay vessels firmly yet delicately, ever mindful of their nature. So, too, Jehovah, the Great Potter, tempers his dealings with us according to the frailty of our sinful nature.—Compare 2 Corinthians 4:7.

⁵ Jehovah understands how powerful sin is. The Scriptures describe sin as a potent force that has man in its deadly grip. Just how strong is sin's grasp? In the book of Romans, the inspired apostle Paul explains this in graphic terms: We are "under sin," as soldiers are under their commander (Romans 3:9); it has "ruled" over mankind like a king (Romans 5:21); it "resides," or is "dwelling," within us (Romans 7:17, 20); its "law" is continually at work in us, in effect trying to control our course. (Romans 7:23, 25) What a difficult battle we have to resist sin's powerful hold on our fallen flesh!—Romans 7:21, 24.

⁶ Hence, our merciful God knows that perfect obedience is not possible for us, no matter how much our hearts may want to give it to him. (1 Kings 8:46) He lovingly assures us that when we seek his fatherly mercy with a contrite heart, he will extend forgiveness. The psalmist David said: "The sacrifices to God are a broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not despise." (Psalm 51:17) Jehovah will never reject, or turn away, a heart that is broken and crushed by the burden of guilt. How

* Interestingly, the Hebrew word rendered "the formation of us" is used concerning the clay vessels formed by a potter.—Isaiah 29:16.

5. How does the book of Romans describe sin's powerful grip on our fallen flesh?

6. How does Jehovah view those who seek his mercy with a contrite heart?

beautifully that describes Jehovah's readiness to forgive!

⁷ Does this mean, though, that we can presume on God's mercy, using our sinful nature as an excuse to sin? By no means! Jehovah is not guided by mere sentiment. His mercy has limits. He will by no means forgive those who hard-heartedly practice malicious, willful sin with no repentance. (Hebrews 10:26-31) On the other hand, when he sees a heart that is "broken and crushed," he is "ready to forgive." (Proverbs 17:3) Let us consider some of the expressive language used in the Bible to describe the completeness of divine forgiveness.

How Completely Does Jehovah Forgive?

⁸ Repentant King David said: "My sin I finally confessed to you, and my error I did not cover. I said: 'I shall make confession over my transgressions to Jehovah.' And you yourself *pardoned* the error of my sins." (Psalm 32:5) The expression "pardoned" translates a Hebrew word that basically means "lift up," "bear, carry." Its use here signifies 'to take away guilt, iniquity, transgression.' So Jehovah lifted up David's sins and carried them away, as it were. (Compare Leviticus 16:20-22.) This no doubt eased the feelings of guilt that David had been carrying. (Compare Psalm 32:3.) We too can have full confidence in the God who pardons the sins of those who seek his forgiveness on the basis of their faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 20:28; compare Isaiah 53:12.) Those whose sins Jehovah thus lifts up and carries away need not continue to carry the burden of guilt feelings for past sins.

7. Why can we not presume on God's mercy?

8. What does Jehovah do, in effect, when he pardons our sins, and what effect should this have on us?



**When others have been hurt
by our sins, Jehovah expects
us to make amends**

The phrase 'get blotted out' translates a Greek verb that, when used metaphorically, can mean "to wipe out, obliterate, cancel or destroy." According to some scholars, the image expressed is that of erasing handwriting. How was this possible? The ink commonly used in ancient times was made of a mixture that included carbon, gum, and water. Soon after working with such ink, a person could take a wet sponge and wipe the writing away.

⁹ Jesus drew on the relationship of creditors and debtors to illustrate how Jehovah forgives. For example, Jesus urged us to pray: "Forgive us our debts." (Matthew 6: 12) Jesus thus likened "sins" to "debts." (Luke 11:4) When we sin, we become "debtors" to Jehovah. The Greek verb translated "forgive" can mean "to let go, give up, a debt, by not demanding it." In a sense, when Jehovah forgives, he cancels the debt that would otherwise be charged against our account. Repentant sinners can thus take comfort. Jehovah will never demand payment for a debt he has canceled!—Psalm 32:1, 2; compare Matthew 18:23-35.

¹⁰ At Acts 3:19, the Bible uses another vivid figure of speech to describe God's forgiveness: "Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out."

9. What is the meaning of Jesus' words: "Forgive us our debts"?

10, 11. (a) What is the image expressed by the phrase 'get blotted out,' found at Acts 3:19? (b) How is the completeness of Jehovah's forgiveness illustrated?

¹¹ Therein is a beautiful picture of the completeness of Jehovah's forgiveness. When he forgives our sins, it is as though he takes a sponge and wipes them away. We need not fear that he will hold such sins against us in the future, for the Bible reveals something else about Jehovah's mercy that is truly remarkable: When he forgives, he forgets!

"Their Sin I Shall Remember No More"

¹² Through the prophet Jeremiah, Jehovah promised regarding those in the new covenant: "I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:34) Does this mean that when Jehovah forgives he is unable to recall sins anymore? That could hardly be the case. The Bible tells us of the sins of many individuals whom Jehovah forgave, including David. (2 Samuel 11:1-17; 12:1-13) Jehovah obviously is still aware of the errors they

12. When the Bible says that Jehovah forgets our sins, does it mean that he is unable to recall them, and why do you so answer?

committed, and so should we be. The record of their sins, as well as that of their repentance and forgiveness by God, has been preserved for our benefit. (Romans 15:4) What, then, does the Bible mean when it says that Jehovah does not “remember” the sins of those whom he forgives?

¹³ The Hebrew verb rendered “I shall remember” implies more than simply to recall the past. According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, it includes “the additional implication of taking appropriate action.” So in this sense, to “remember” sin involves taking action against sinners. When the prophet Hosea said concerning wayward Israelites, “He [Jehovah] will remember their error,” the prophet meant that Jehovah would take action against them for their lack of repentance. Thus, the rest of the verse adds: “He will give attention to their sins.” (Hosea 9:9) On the other hand, when Jehovah says, “Their sin I shall remember no more,” he is assuring us that once he forgives a repentant sinner, he will not act against him for those sins at some future time. (Ezekiel 18: 21, 22) He thus forgets in the sense that he does not bring our sins up again and again in order to accuse or punish us over and over. Jehovah thereby sets a splendid example for us to imitate in our dealings with others. When disagreements arise, it is best not to dredge up past offenses that you previously agreed to forgive.

What About the Consequences?

¹⁴ Does Jehovah’s readiness to forgive mean that a repentant sinner is exempted

13. (a) What is included in the meaning of the Hebrew verb rendered “I shall remember”? (b) When Jehovah says, “Their sin I shall remember no more,” of what is he assuring us?

14. Why does forgiveness not mean that a repentant sinner is exempted from all consequences of his wrong course?

from all consequences of his wrong course? Not at all. We cannot sin with impunity. Paul wrote: “Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap.” (Galatians 6:7) We may face certain consequences of our action or problems, but after extending forgiveness, Jehovah does not cause adversity to befall us. When troubles arise, a Christian should not feel, ‘Perhaps Jehovah is punishing me for past sins.’ (Compare James 1:13.) On the other hand, Jehovah does not spare us from all the effects of our wrong actions. Divorce, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, loss of trust or respect—all of these may be the sad consequences of sin, and Jehovah will not shield us from them. Recall that even though he forgave David for his sins in connection with Bath-sheba and Uriah, Jehovah did not protect David from the disastrous consequences that followed.—2 Samuel 12:9-14.

¹⁵ Our sins may have other consequences too. Consider, for example, the account in Leviticus chapter 6. The Mosaic Law here addresses the situation wherein a person commits a serious wrong by seizing a fellow Israelite’s goods through robbery, extortion, or fraud. The sinner then denies that he is guilty, even being so daring as to swear falsely. It is one person’s word against another’s. Later, however, the offender becomes stricken in conscience and confesses his sin. To gain God’s forgiveness, he has to do three more things: restore what he had taken, pay the victim a fine of 20 percent, and offer a ram as a guilt offering. Then, the law says: “The priest must make an atonement for him before Jehovah, and so it must be forgiven

15, 16. How did the law recorded at Leviticus 6: 1-7 benefit both the victim and the offender?

him.”—Leviticus 6:1-7; compare Matthew 5:23, 24.

¹⁶ This law was a merciful provision from God. It benefited the victim, whose property was returned and who no doubt felt much relief when the offender finally acknowledged his sin. At the same time, the law benefited the one whose conscience at last moved him to admit his guilt and correct his wrong. Indeed, if he had refused to do so, there would be no forgiveness for him from God.

¹⁷ Although we are not under the Mosaic Law, it gives us precious insight into Jehovah’s mind, including his thinking on forgiveness. (Colossians 2:13, 14) When others have been hurt or victimized by our sins, Jehovah is pleased when we do what we can to ‘right the wrong.’ (2 Corinthians 7:11) This involves acknowledging our sin, admitting our guilt, and even apologizing to the victim. Then we can appeal to Jehovah on the basis of Jesus’ sacrifice and experience the relief of a clean conscience and the assurance that we have been forgiven by God.—Hebrews 10:21, 22.

17. When others have been hurt by our sins, what does Jehovah expect us to do?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Why is Jehovah “ready to forgive”?
- ☐ How does the Bible describe the completeness of Jehovah’s forgiveness?
- ☐ When Jehovah forgives, in what sense does he forget?
- ☐ What does Jehovah expect us to do when others have been hurt by our sins?

¹⁸ Like any loving parent, Jehovah may offer forgiveness along with a measure of discipline. (Proverbs 3:11, 12) A repentant Christian may have to relinquish his privilege of serving as an elder, a ministerial servant, or a pioneer. It may be painful to him to lose for a period of time privileges that were precious to him. Such discipline, however, does not mean that he has lost Jehovah’s favor or that Jehovah has withheld forgiveness. In addition, we must remember that discipline from Jehovah is proof of his love for us. Accepting and applying it is in our best interests and can lead to everlasting life.—Hebrews 12:5-11.

¹⁹ How refreshing to know that we serve a God who is “ready to forgive”! Jehovah sees more than our sins and mistakes. (Psalm 130:3, 4) He knows what is in our hearts. If you feel that your heart is broken and crushed because of past wrongs, do not conclude that you are beyond the reach of Jehovah’s mercy. Despite what mistakes you may have made, if you have truly repented, taken steps to right the wrong, and earnestly prayed for Jehovah’s forgiveness on the basis of Jesus’ shed blood, you can have full confidence that the words of 1 John 1:9 apply to you: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

²⁰ The Bible encourages us to imitate Jehovah’s forgiveness in our dealings with one another. To what extent, however, can we be expected to forgive and forget when others sin against us? This will be discussed in the following article.

18. What discipline may accompany Jehovah’s forgiveness?
19, 20. (a) If you have committed wrongs, why should you not feel that you are beyond the reach of Jehovah’s mercy? (b) What will be discussed in the next article?

‘CONTINUE FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER FREELY’

“Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely.”—COLOSSIANS 3:13.

LORD, how many times is my brother to sin against me and am I to forgive him? Up to seven times?” (Matthew 18:21) Peter may have thought he was being very generous with his suggestion. At the time, rabbinic tradition said that one should not extend forgiveness more than three times for the same offense.* Imagine Peter’s surprise, then, when Jesus replied: “I say to you, not, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy-seven times!” (Matthew 18:22) The repetition of seven was equivalent to saying “indefinitely.” In Jesus’ view, there is virtually no limit to the number of times a Christian should forgive others.

² Applying that counsel, however, is not always easy. Who of us has not felt the sting of unfair injury? Perhaps someone you trusted betrayed a confidence. (Prov-

* According to the Babylonian Talmud, one rabbinic tradition stated: “If a man commits a transgression, the first, second and third time he is forgiven, the fourth time he is not forgiven.” (Yoma 86b) This was partly based on a wrong understanding of such texts as Amos 1:3; 2:6; and Job 33:29.

1. (a) When Peter suggested that we forgive others “up to seven times,” why may he have thought that he was being generous? (b) What did Jesus mean when he said that we should forgive “up to seventy-seven times”?

2, 3. (a) What are some situations in which it may seem difficult to forgive others? (b) Why can we be confident that it is in our best interests to forgive others?

erbs 11:13) The thoughtless remarks of a close friend may have ‘stabbed you like a sword.’ (Proverbs 12:18) Abusive treatment from someone you loved or trusted may have caused deep wounds. When such things happen, our natural reaction may be to feel angry. We may be inclined to stop speaking to the offender, avoiding him altogether if possible. Forgiving him, it may seem, would allow him to get away with hurting us. Yet, by nurturing resentment, we end up hurting ourselves.

³ Jesus therefore teaches us to forgive —“up to seventy-seven times.” Surely his teachings would never work to our harm. Everything he taught originated with Jehovah, ‘the One teaching us to benefit ourselves.’ (Isaiah 48:17; John 7:16, 17) Logically, it must be in our best interests to forgive others. Before we discuss why we should forgive and how we can do so, it might be helpful first to clarify what forgiveness is and what it is not. Our concept of forgiveness may have some bearing on our ability to forgive when we are offended by others.

⁴ Forgiving others for personal offenses does not mean that we are condoning or minimizing what they have done; neither does it mean letting others take unfair advantage of us. After all, when Jehovah

4. What does forgiving others not mean, but how is forgiveness defined?



When we harbor resentment, the offender may be oblivious to our turmoil

forgives us, he is certainly not trivializing our sins, and he will never allow sinful humans to trample upon his mercy. (Hebrews 10:29) According to *Insight on the Scriptures*, forgiveness is defined as “the act of pardoning an offender; ceasing to feel resentment toward him because of his offense and giving up all claim to recompense.” (Volume 1, page 861)* The Bible provides us with sound reasons for forgiving others.

Why Forgive Others?

⁵ An important reason to forgive others is indicated at Ephesians 5:1: “Therefore, become imitators of God, as beloved children.” In what respect should we “become

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

5. What important reason to forgive others is indicated at Ephesians 5:1?

imitators of God”? The word “therefore” connects the expression with the preceding verse, which says: “Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, *freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you.*” (Ephesians 4:32) Yes, when it comes to forgiveness, we should become imitators of God. As a little boy tries to be just like his father, we, as children whom Jehovah dearly loves, should want to become like our forgiving heavenly Father. How it must delight Jehovah’s heart to look down from the heavens and see his earthly children trying to be like him by forgiving one another!—Luke 6:35, 36; compare Matthew 5:44-48.

⁶ Granted, we can never forgive in a perfect sense as Jehovah does. But that is all the more reason why we should forgive one another. Consider: There is a vast difference

6. In what way is there a vast difference between Jehovah’s forgiveness and ours?



between Jehovah's forgiveness and ours. (Isaiah 55:7-9) When we forgive those who have sinned against us, it is often with the awareness that sooner or later we may need them to return the favor by forgiving us. With humans, it is always a case of sinners forgiving sinners. With Jehovah, however, forgiveness is always one way. He forgives us, but we will never need to forgive him. If Jehovah, who does not sin, can so lovingly and completely forgive us, should not we sinful humans try to forgive one another? —Matthew 6:12.

⁷ Even more important, if we refuse to forgive others when there is a basis for mercy, it can adversely affect our own relationship with God. Jehovah does not just ask us to forgive one another; he expects us to do so. According to the Scriptures, part of the motivation for us to be forgiving is in order

7. If we refuse to forgive others when there is a basis for mercy, how can it adversely affect our own relationship with Jehovah?

When you approach others to make peace, misunderstandings may easily be cleared up

that Jehovah might forgive us or because he has forgiven us. (Matthew 6:14; Mark 11:25; Ephesians 4:32; 1 John 4:11) If, then, we are unwilling to forgive others when there is sound reason to do so, can we really expect such forgiveness from Jehovah?—Matthew 18:21-35.

⁸ Jehovah teaches his people "the good way in which they should walk." (1 Kings 8:36) When he instructs us to forgive one another, we can be confident that he has our best interests at heart. With good reason the Bible tells us to "yield place to the wrath." (Romans 12:19) Resentment is a heavy burden to carry in life. When we harbor it, it consumes our thoughts, robs us of peace, and stifles our joy. Prolonged anger, like jealousy, can have a detrimental effect

8. Why does being forgiving work in our best interests?

on our physical health. (Proverbs 14:30) And through all of this, the offender may go his way oblivious to our turmoil! Our loving Creator knows that we need openly to forgive others not only for their benefit but also for our *own*. The Biblical counsel to forgive is, indeed, 'the good way to walk.'

"Continue Putting Up With One Another"

⁹ Physical injuries may range from minor cuts to deep wounds, and not all require the same degree of attention. It is similar with injured feelings—some wounds are deeper than others. Do we really need to make an issue over every minor bruise we suffer in our relationships with others? Minor irritations, slights, and annoyances are a part of life and do not necessarily require formal forgiveness. If we are known as someone who shuns others for every petty disappointment and who then insists that they apologize before we will treat them in a civil way again, we may force them to tread softly around us—or to keep a safe distance!

¹⁰ Instead, it is far better to "have a reputation for being reasonable." (Philippians 4:5, *Phillips*) As imperfect creatures serv-

9, 10. (a) What type of situations do not necessarily require formal forgiveness? (b) What is suggested by the expression "continue putting up with one another"?

In Our Next Issue

The Roots of Modern Christmas

**A Hidden Treasure Comes to Light
—The Story of the Makarios Bible**

Jehovah Rules With Compassion

ing shoulder to shoulder, we can reasonably expect that from time to time our brothers may rub us the wrong way, so to speak, and we may do the same to them. Colossians 3:13 advises us: "Continue putting up with one another." That expression suggests being patient with others, tolerating the things we dislike in them or the traits we may find irritating. Such patience and forbearance can help us to cope with the minor scrapes and scratches we sustain in our dealings with others—without disrupting the peace of the congregation.—1 Corinthians 16:14.

When the Wounds Are Deeper

¹¹ However, what if others sin against us, causing a noticeable wound? If the sin is not too serious, we may have little difficulty applying the Bible's counsel to 'forgive one another freely.' (Ephesians 4:32) Such a readiness to forgive is in harmony with Peter's inspired words: "Above all things, have intense love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8) Keeping in mind that we too are sinners enables us to make allowances for the trespasses of others. When we thus forgive, we let go of the resentment rather than nurture it. As a result, our relationship with the offender may not suffer any lasting harm, and we also help to preserve the precious peace of the congregation. (Romans 14:19) In time, the memory of what he did may well fade away.

¹² What, though, if someone sins against us in a more serious way, deeply injuring us? For example, a trusted friend may have divulged some extremely personal matters

11. When others sin against us, what can help us to forgive them?

12. (a) What initiative may we need to take in order to forgive someone who has deeply hurt us? (b) How do the words at Ephesians 4:26 indicate that we should settle matters quickly?

that you confided in him. You feel deeply hurt, embarrassed, and betrayed. You have tried to dismiss it, but the matter will not go away. In such a case, you may need to take some initiative to settle the problem, perhaps by speaking to the offender. It is wise to do this before the matter has a chance to fester. Paul exhorted us: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin [that is, by harboring or acting on our anger]; let the sun not set with you in a provoked state." (Ephesians 4:26) Adding meaning to Paul's words is the fact that among the Jews, sundown marked the close of one day and the start of a new one. Hence, the advice is: Settle the matter quickly!—Matthew 5:23, 24.

¹³ How should you approach the offender? "Seek peace and pursue it," says 1 Peter 3:11. Your objective, then, is not to express anger but to make peace with your brother. To that end, it is best to avoid harsh words and gestures; these may elicit a similar response from the other person. (Proverbs 15:18; 29:11) In addition, avoid exaggerated statements like, "You always . . . !" or, "You never . . . !" Such exaggerated comments may only cause him to become defensive. Instead, let your tone of voice and facial expression convey that you want to resolve a matter that has deeply hurt you. Be specific in explaining how you feel about what happened. Give the other person a chance to explain his actions. Listen to what he has to say. (James 1:19) What good will that do? Proverbs 19:11 explains: "The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger, and it is beauty on his part to pass over transgression." Understanding the other person's feelings and the reasons for his actions may dispel negative thoughts and feelings toward him. When we approach

13. When we approach someone who has offended us, what should be our objective, and what suggestions can help us to reach it?

the situation with the goal of making peace and maintain that attitude, very likely any misunderstanding can be cleared up, appropriate apologies made, and forgiveness extended.

¹⁴ Does forgiving others mean that we must actually forget what happened? Recall Jehovah's own example in this regard, as discussed in the preceding article. When the Bible says that Jehovah forgets our sins, this does not mean that he is unable to recall them. (Isaiah 43:25) Rather, he forgets in the sense that once he forgives, he does not hold those sins against us at some future time. (Ezekiel 33:14-16) Similarly, forgiving fellow humans does not necessarily mean that we will be unable to recall what they did. However, we *can* forget in the sense that we do not hold it against the offender or bring it up again in the future. With the matter thus settled, it would not be appropriate to gossip about it; neither would it be loving to avoid the offender completely, treating him as though he were disfellowshipped. (Proverbs 17:9) True, it may take some time for our relationship with him to heal; we may not enjoy the same closeness as before. But we still love him as our Christian brother and do our best to maintain peaceful relations.—Compare Luke 17:3.

When It Seems Impossible to Forgive

¹⁵ What, though, if others sin against us in a way that inflicts the deepest of wounds, and yet there is no acknowledgment of the sin, no repentance, and no apology on the part of the offender? (Proverbs 28:13) The Scriptures clearly indicate that Jehovah

14. When we forgive others, in what sense should we forget?

15, 16. (a) Are Christians required to forgive a wrongdoer who is not repentant? (b) How can we apply the Bible's advice found at Psalm 37:8?

does not forgive unrepentant, hardened sinners. (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26, 27) What about us? *Insight on the Scriptures* says: "Christians are not required to forgive those who practice malicious, willful sin with no repentance. Such become God's enemies." (Volume 1, page 862) No Christian who has been a victim of extremely unjust, detestable, or heinous treatment should feel forced to forgive, or pardon, a wrongdoer who is not repentant.—Psalm 139:21, 22.

¹⁶ Understandably, those who have been victims of cruel mistreatment may feel hurt and angry. However, recall that holding on to anger and resentment can be very harmful to us. Waiting for an admission or apology that never comes, we may only get more and more upset. Being obsessed with the injustice may keep the anger seething within us, with devastating effects on our spiritual, emotional, and physical health. In effect, we allow the one who hurt us to continue hurting us. Wisely, the Bible advises: "Let anger alone and leave rage." (Psalm 37:8) Some Christians, therefore, have found that in time they were able to make a decision to forgive in the sense of ceasing to harbor resentment—not excus-

ing what happened to them, but refusing to be consumed with anger. Leaving the matter squarely in the hands of the God of justice, they experienced much relief and were able to get on with their lives.—Psalm 37:28.

¹⁷ When a wound is very deep, we may not succeed in completely erasing it from our mind, at least not in this system of things. But Jehovah promises a new world in which "he 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 21:4) Whatever we may remember at that time will not cause us the deep hurt, or pain, that may now burden our hearts.—Isaiah 65:17, 18.

¹⁸ Meanwhile, we must live and work together as brothers and sisters who are imperfect, sinful humans. We all make mistakes. From time to time, we disappoint one another and even hurt one another. Well did Jesus know that we would need to forgive others, "not, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy-seven times"! (Matthew 18:22) True, we cannot forgive as completely as Jehovah does. Yet, in most cases when our brothers sin against us, we can forgive in the sense of overcoming resentment and we can forget in the sense of not holding the matter against them indefinitely into the future. When we thus forgive and forget, we help to preserve not only the peace of the congregation but also our own peace of mind and heart. Above all, we will enjoy the peace that only our loving God, Jehovah, can provide.—Philippians 4:7.

17. What comforting assurance does Jehovah's promise recorded at Revelation 21:4 provide?

18. (a) Why is there a need to be forgiving in our dealings with our brothers and sisters? (b) When others sin against us, in what sense can we forgive and forget? (c) How does this benefit us?

Questions for Review

- ☐ Why should we be willing to forgive others?
- ☐ What type of situations call for us to "continue putting up with one another"?
- ☐ When we have been deeply hurt by the sins of others, what can we do to settle the matter peacefully?
- ☐ When we forgive others, in what sense should we forget?

From Successful Students to Successful Missionaries

I STILL can't believe we have had this privilege!" exclaimed Will, referring to the training that he and his wife, Patsy, had just completed as students of the 103rd class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. Zahid and Jeni agreed. "We feel honored to be here," they said. All the students had done good work at the school. Now they were eager to begin their career as missionaries. But first, at the graduation program on September 6, 1997, they received loving counsel that would help them succeed in their missionary assignments.

The chairman of the program was Theodore Jaracz, a member of the Governing Body. He pointed out that—along with the Bethel family and representatives of 48 of the Watch Tower Society's branches—friends and relatives from Canada, Europe, Puerto Rico, and the United States were present to assure the students of their support and their love. Brother Jaracz observed that missionaries sent out by Christendom's churches have often become distracted from missionary work and have begun pursuing scholarly endeavors or have even got entangled in politics. In contrast, graduates of Gilead do what they have been trained to do. They teach people the Bible.

Robert Butler from the Society's Brooklyn office then spoke on the theme "Make Your Way Successful." He explained that while men measure success in terms of financial or other personal gain, what really matters is how God measures success. Jesus' ministry was successful, not because he

made large numbers of converts, but because he was faithful in his assignment. Jesus brought glory to Jehovah, and he remained uncontaminated by the world. (John 16:33; 17:4) These are things that every Christian can do.

"Be Slaves to All Persons," advised Robert Pevy, formerly a missionary in the Orient. The apostle Paul was a successful missionary. What was his secret? He made himself a slave to all. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) The speaker explained: "A Gilead graduate with that attitude will not view the missionary service as a kind of career move, a stepping-stone to more important positions in the organization. A missionary goes to his assignment with just one motive—to serve, for that is what slaves do."

Basing his counsel mainly on 2 Corinthians chapters 3 and 4, Gerrit Lösch of the Governing Body exhorted the students to "Reflect Like Mirrors the Glory of Jehovah." He reminded them that the knowledge of God is like a light that illuminates a Christian when he opens his heart to receive it. We reflect that light by preaching the good news and by maintaining fine conduct. "At times you may feel inadequate," he acknowledged. "When such feelings arise, rely on Jehovah, 'that the power beyond what is normal may be God's.'" (2 Corinthians 4:7) Echoing Paul's words recorded at 2 Corinthians 4:1, Brother Lösch appealed to the students: "Do not give up your missionary assignment. Keep your mirror polished!"

Karl Adams, a member of the Gilead faculty, spoke on the intriguing theme "Where Is Jehovah?" The question refers, not to God's location in the universe, but to the need to consider Jehovah's viewpoint and indications of his direction. "Under stress," he said, "even a person who has a long record in Jehovah's service may lose sight of that." (Job 35:10) What of our modern day? In 1942, God's people were in need of guidance. Was the preaching work winding up, or was there more work to be done? What was Jehovah's will for his people? As they studied God's Word, the answer became clear. "Before the calendar year was out," Brother Adams declared, "plans had been laid for the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead." Jehovah has certainly blessed the work of missionaries sent out by that school.

Mark Noumair was the second instructor to speak. In his talk, entitled "How Will You Use Your Talent?," he encouraged the students to apply the training they had received at Gilead as soon as they arrived in their new assignments. "Reach out to others," he said. "Get involved. Be anxious to learn the customs, the history, the humor of the country. The sooner you learn the language, the better off you will be."

Zealous Students Find Joy in the Ministry

In addition to applying themselves to their studies while at Gilead, the students were assigned to 11 local congregations. On weekends, they shared zealously in the preaching activity. Wallace Liverance of the Gilead faculty invited several of them to share some of their experiences with the audience. Their joy was evident as they related experiences they had had when witnessing at shopping malls, in parking lots, in business territory, on the street, and

from house to house. Some of them looked for ways of reaching foreign-speaking people who lived and worked in their congregation's territory. At least ten home Bible studies were started and conducted by members of the 103rd class during the five months of their training.

Longtime Missionaries Share Secrets of Success

Following this enjoyable part of the program, Patrick Lafranca and William Van de Wall invited seven Branch Committee members to outline the lessons they had learned in their missionary careers for the benefit of the class. They admonished the graduates to consider their missionary assignment as coming from Jehovah and to be determined to stick to the assignment. They spoke of the positive effects Gilead-trained missionaries have had on the work in other lands.

What helped these Branch Committee members to serve for decades as happy, productive missionaries? They worked closely with the local brothers and learned from them. They applied themselves to learning the language as soon as they arrived in their assignments. They learned to be flexible and to adapt to local customs. Charles Eisenhower, a graduate of the first class of Gilead and a missionary for 54 years, shared five "secrets" that successful mis-

Class Statistics

Number of countries represented:	9
Number of countries assigned to:	18
Number of students:	48
Number of married couples:	24
Average age:	33
Average years in truth:	16
Average years in full-time ministry:	12



103rd Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Bunn, A.; Dahlstedt, M.; Campaña, Z.; Boyacioglu, R.; Ogando, G.; Nikonchuk, T.; Melvin, S.
- (2) May, M.; Mapula, M.; Lwin, J.; Hietamaa, D.; Hernandez, C.; Boyacioglu, N.; Sturm, A.; Melvin, K.
- (3) Thom, J.; Mapula, E.; Nault, M.; Teasdale, P.; Wright, P.; Pérez, L.; Shenefelt, M.; Pak, H.
- (4) Murphy, M.; Campaña, J.; Stewart, S.; Cereda, M.; Reed, M.; Pérez, A.; Teasdale, W.; Pak, J.
- (5) Stewart, D.; Wright, A.; Cereda, P.; Nikonchuk, F.; Reed, J.; Hietamaa, K.; Ogando, C.; Shenefelt, R.
- (6) Murphy, T.; Hernandez, J.; Nault, M.; Bunn, B.; Thom, R.; Dahlstedt, T.; Lwin, Z.; May, R.; Sturm, A.

sionaries have learned: (1) Study the Bible regularly, (2) study the language, (3) be active in the ministry, (4) work for peace in the missionary home, and (5) pray regularly to Jehovah. The students were impressed not only by the practical advice they received but by the obvious joy these seasoned missionaries have in Jehovah's service. As Armando and Lupe put it, "they are happy when they are talking about their lives."

After the interviews, one discourse remained. Albert Schroeder, a member of the Governing Body, chose as his theme "Faithful Stewardship of God's Word Reveals Precious Gems of Truth." Since the Bible is the principal textbook of Gilead School, the students were interested in what he had to say. Brother Schroeder pointed out that when work on the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* began 50 years ago,



the anointed members of the New World Bible Translation Committee did not look for the approval of men but relied upon the guidance of holy spirit. (Jeremiah 17:5-8) Recently, though, some authorities have recognized the high standard set by the *New World Translation*. In a letter to the Society, one scholar wrote: "I know a quality publication when I see one, and your 'New World Bible Translation Committee' has done its job well."

After this talk, the students received their diplomas, and their assignments were announced to the audience. It was a touching moment for the members of the class. As a class representative read a letter of appreciation, many had a lump in their throat and tears in their eyes. Some of the students had been preparing for missionary work for years. Realizing that the Gilead course would be conducted in English, a few had moved to English-speaking congre-

Where are we going?

gations to improve their command of the language. Others had moved where there was a greater need for pioneers, either in their own country or abroad. Still others had prepared by reading experiences, doing research, or viewing the Society's videocassette *To the Ends of the Earth* over and over again.

Will and Patsy, mentioned at the outset, were overwhelmed by the personal interest the students were shown. "People who didn't even know us were hugging us and taking our picture. A member of the Governing Body shook our hand and said, 'We're proud of you!'" There is no doubt about it, the students of the 103rd class are dearly loved. They have been well trained. The schooling they have received at Gilead will allow them to make the transition from successful students to successful missionaries.



RICH REWARDS FOR SACRED SERVICE

AS TOLD BY HARRY BLOOR

About a hundred years ago, my grandfather was a staunch member of the Methodist Church. He was also a respected lay preacher, who gave generously to support many chapels in Stoke-on-Trent, England's pottery town. Then he suffered hard times financially. To help Grandfather, my father arranged for him to operate a small village store. The store had a license to sell beer, and when the Methodists learned this, they immediately excommunicated Grandfather.

FATHER was furious and vowed that he would never again have anything to do with religion—and he kept his word. He had been a policeman, but later he became the proprietor of a tavern. So I was brought up in the midst of the smells and smoke of that place. Religion played no part in my life, but I did learn to play most board games proficiently! Because of Grandfather's early influence, however, I retained a healthy respect for the Bible, although I knew little about it.

I Learned Bible Truth

In 1923, when I was 24, I moved east to Nottingham and started courting Mary, who lived some 25 miles away in the village of Whetstone, southwest of Leicester. Her father, Arthur Rest, had been the organist at a local chapel, but by this time he was an ardent Bible Student, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. Arthur was always talking to me about his newly found faith—with scant success. My interest was



Prepared to share in the ministry in the 1920's

*Scenes from the
Leicester convention*



kindled, however, when I accompanied him to the local Baptist chapel on Sunday afternoon, July 13, 1924, to hear a lecture by a member of parliament who was a prominent Baptist. His subject, "The Teachings of Pastor Russell Investigated in the Light of Scripture," intrigued me. I still have the notes I took then.

The Baptists refused a request by the Bible Students to reply to the attack on their beliefs. I was incensed at this and resolved to find an alternative location to hold such a meeting. A nearby barn proved ideal. We swept it clean, dusted down the cobwebs, pushed the threshing machines to one side, and then we were all prepared. We gathered 70 chairs, and we printed handbills.

When Frank Freer arrived from Leicester to deliver the talk, all seats were taken, and another 70 people were standing! Frank's clear reasoning from the Scriptures appealed to me, as it did to many others present. From that time on, the little congregation of Bible Students in Blaby near Leicester expanded rapidly. It was also the turning point in my life—as well as in

Mary's. In 1925 we both made our dedication to Jehovah, got baptized, and were married.

Spiritual Blessings

The following year, I was appointed service director for the Blaby Congregation. My wife and I wanted to follow in the steps of the colporteurs and become full-time evangelizers, but it soon became apparent that Mary's health would not permit her to keep up such a vigorous schedule. Although she suffered poor health until her death in 1987, she was a fine companion and an excellent minister who was adept at informal witnessing and starting Bible studies. Night after night we were either attending meetings or sharing Bible truths with our neighbors.

I was an engineer and worked with a firm that manufactured sawmill machinery. My work involved extensive travel around Britain, as well as in France, and Mary usually accompanied me. These trips allowed us opportunities to witness extensively.

Foundations for Expansion

In 1925 we put up a fine building for our meetings in Blaby, and from there we organized an effective witnessing program. Every Sunday morning, we hired a coach that took us to scattered villages and smaller towns. Along the way publishers were dropped off to preach, and then they were picked up by the coach on the return journey. During the warm summer months, we had a late Sunday afternoon Bible study, using a recent issue of *The Watchtower*. Afterward, at eight o'clock, we met in the Leicester marketplace for an open-air public talk. One night 200 people listened. This activity laid the foundations for the many congregations that now exist in and around Leicester.

In 1926 an epoch-making convention was held jointly at London's Alexandra Palace and Royal Albert Hall. On that occasion Joseph F. Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Society, released the book *Deliverance*. The resolution "A Testimony to the Rulers of the World" and Brother Rutherford's powerful public address "Why World Powers Are Tottering—The Remedy" were printed in full in a leading newspaper the day after they were presented. More than 10,000 heard the public lecture, and 50,000,000 copies of the resolution were subsequently distributed worldwide. That convention served to accelerate the preaching work in Britain.

Large Convention During Wartime

The second world war broke out in September 1939, and by 1941 the war was at its height. German bombers raided day and night, and a nationwide blackout was in force. Food was scarce, and what was available was strictly rationed. Transportation was very limited, even by train. Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles,

we held a five-day national convention on September 3-7, 1941.

Leicester's De Montfort Hall was chosen as the convention site because Leicester is in the center of England. As I was in the timber trade, I was able to assist with the construction of advertising signs. I also arranged local transportation for the conventioners. By buying tickets in advance and paying more than the regular price, we kept Leicester's trams running even on Sunday.

Because there were restrictions on travel, our hope was that perhaps 3,000 Witnesses could come. Imagine the thrill when over 10,000 delegates said they would be there! But where would they stay? Leicester citizens kindly invited many to stay in their homes. Additionally, about a thousand were accommodated in tents erected in a field two miles from the convention site. Camp Gideon, as we called it, caused quite a stir in the community.

Large white tents were rented to be used for convention departments and to accommodate the huge overflow crowds. When it was determined that in the bright moonlight, the tents might serve as a target for Nazi bombers, they were hastily camouflaged. The war, and especially the non-participation of the Witnesses in it, was a matter of public concern. Hundreds of Witnesses were at the time in prison for their Bible-based position on neutrality.—Isaiah 2:4; John 17:16.

The *Sunday Pictorial*, of September 7, 1941, reported: "It is an astonishing thing to find 10,000 people, mostly young, spending a week talking about religion without mentioning the war, except as a side issue."

"I asked whether the Witnesses had any members in Germany. Yes, I was told, and nearly all of them, some 6,000, were in concentration camps."

The reporter added: "Oh, yes, the Nazis are the enemy all right, but the Witnesses are doing very little about them, except to sell tracts and listen to speeches."

Newspaper comments about us were generally negative, and opposers even resorted to violence in unsuccessful attempts to disrupt our convention. Yet, London's *Daily Mail* did admit, somewhat begrudgingly: "The organisation was smooth, unobtrusive, and efficient."

We were accused of being responsible for the city's short supply of cigarettes. But *The Daily Mail* explained: "Neither Leicester nor the Tobacco Controller can complain that Witnesses are smoking up Leicester's cigarettes. They don't smoke." Also, the complaints that local inhabitants were deprived of food by the Witnesses were dispelled when it was explained that they had brought most of their own rations with them. In fact, at the end of the convention, 150 four-pound loaves of bread were donated to the Leicester Royal Infirmary—a considerable contribution in those times of food shortages.

The convention provided a great spiritual uplift for the some 11,000 Witnesses in Britain. They were thrilled that about 12,000 were in attendance! Delegates joyfully engaged in an unprecedented amount of street witnessing in Leicester, and they visited outlying villages with phonograph presentations.

The principal talks of the convention were recordings made the previous month of talks delivered at the five-day convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A. The recording of Brother Rutherford's talk "Children of the King" was a convention highlight. Since it was not possible to import copies of the book *Children* that was released in St. Louis, a special paperback edition was later produced in Britain.

A copy of it was sent to all the children who had attended the convention.

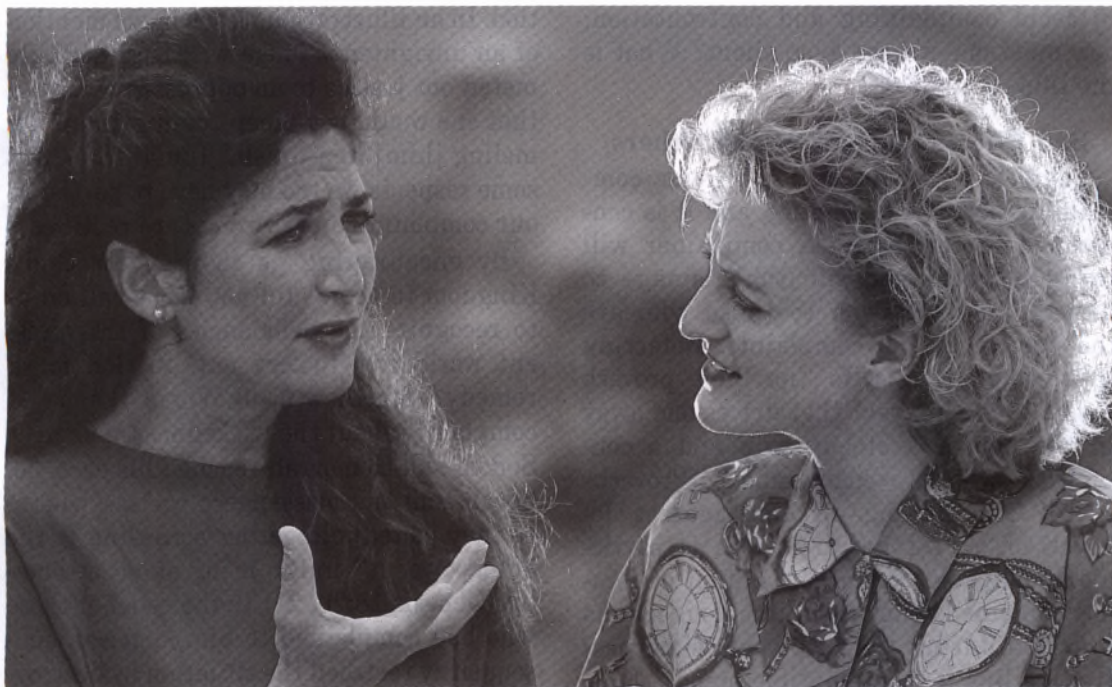
Leicester's Unique Annual Meeting

After the war the growth of Kingdom proclaimers in Britain was marvelous! By the early 1980's, the number of congregations in Leicester had grown to ten. Then we were informed that the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses had decided to hold the annual meeting of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in Leicester in 1983. As city overseer of Leicester, I was soon involved in preparations, including hiring the De Montfort Hall again.

Thirteen members of the Governing Body came from the Society's Brooklyn headquarters for the occasion. A total of 3,671 delegates—this time from around the world, and mainly old-timers—filled the auditorium. An additional 1,500 heard the program at a nearby Assembly Hall.

Albert D. Schroeder, who had had oversight of the Watch Tower Society's branch office in London during our wartime Leicester convention, presided at this annual meeting. Looking back at the 1941 convention, Brother Schroeder asked: "How many of you with us today were present then?" Over half the audience raised their hands. "My! What a reunion for all you faithful, loyal ones!" he exclaimed. Indeed it was an unforgettable experience.

At 98 years of age, I still serve as secretary in our congregation and continue to give public talks, although I now do so sitting down. After Mary's death in 1987, I married Bettina, a widow whom Mary and I had known for many years. I am grateful to be so well cared for, both physically and spiritually. Despite the constraints imposed by Mary's poor health and now by my own old age, I have found that having plenty to do in sacred service has always been richly rewarding.—1 Corinthians 15:58.



Is all complaining bad?

What annoyances are more painful
than those of which we cannot complain?

—Marquis De Custine, 1790-1857.

FOR two years she had endured sexual harassment by a fellow employee. Her protests resulted in verbal abuse and the cold shoulder. The pent-up stress was affecting her health, but what could she do? Similarly, a student who had been at the top of his class was expelled because his conscience would not permit him to take part in the martial-arts drills required by the school. Both felt that they had been

wronged, but should they complain? If they did, could they hope for relief or would it only make matters worse?

Complaints like these and others are common today, living as we do among imperfect people in a less-than-ideal world. Complaining runs the gamut from expressing passive displeasure, grief, pain, or resentment over some situation to a formal allegation against a party. Most people prefer

to avoid complaining and confrontation; yet, must one always keep silent? What is the Bible's view?

Bad Effects on Oneself and Others

There is no doubt that a chronic complaining spirit is damaging, and it is condemned in the Bible. A complainer will bring physical and spiritual damage to himself and vexation to those who are the subject of his complaints. Referring to a complaining wife, the Bible proverb says: "A leaking roof that drives one away in the day of a steady rain and a contentious wife are comparable." (Proverbs 27:15) Complaining directed against Jehovah or one of his provisions is particularly culpable. When the nation of Israel complained about the miraculous manna provided during their 40-year wilderness trek, calling it "contemptible bread," Jehovah sent poisonous serpents to punish the disrespectful complainers, and many died.—Numbers 21:5, 6.

Further, Jesus counseled his followers, not to complain about "the straw" of faults observed in our fellow humans, but to be well aware of the larger "rafter" of shortcomings that we ourselves have. (Matthew 7:1-5) In a similar vein, Paul condemned judging (a form of complaining) another as "inexcusable . . . inasmuch as you that judge practice the same things." These cautions against complaining should move us to avoid being needlessly critical and developing a complaining spirit.—Romans 2:1.

Is All Complaining Condemned?

Should we conclude, then, that all forms of complaint are to be condemned? No, we should not. The Bible indicates that there are many injustices in the flawed world in which we live that rightly call for correc-

tion. In an illustration, Jesus made mention of an unrighteous judge who begrudgingly meted out justice to an oppressed widow so that she would not "keep coming and pummeling [him] to a finish." (Luke 18:1-8) In some respects we too may have to persist in our complaints until wrongs are rectified.

By encouraging us to pray for God's Kingdom to come, did not Jesus call on us to recognize the deficiencies of this present world and to 'cry out' to God for a remedy? (Matthew 6:10) When "the cry of complaint" about the wickedness of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah reached his ears, Jehovah sent his messengers to "see whether they [acted] altogether according to the outcry over it" and to bring about a remedy. (Genesis 18:20, 21) To the relief of those who had complained to him, Jehovah subsequently rectified the situation by destroying the two cities and their immoral inhabitants.

The Christian Congregation

Should it be different among brothers within the Christian congregation? Though imperfect men and women, Christians are earnestly endeavoring to serve God in peace and unity. Yet, situations will arise among them that give cause for a measure of complaint and that call for a remedy. In the first century, a situation arose in the congregation of anointed ones shortly after Pentecost. Many newly converted Christians remained in Jerusalem for further instruction and encouragement. There was a sharing of available food supplies. However, "a murmuring arose on the part of the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution." Rather than condemn these complainers as



troublemakers, the apostles took action to rectify the situation. Yes, just complaints made with due respect and in the proper spirit will be humbly listened to and acted upon by those who have oversight in the congregation.—Acts 6:1-6; 1 Peter 5:3.

To the Proper Authority

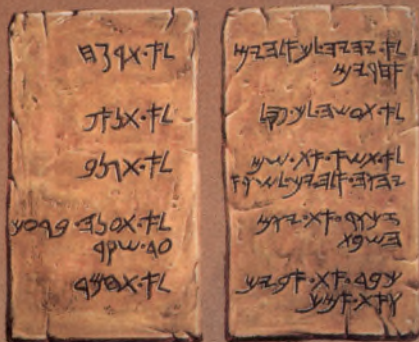
Did you note from the above examples that complaints should be made in the proper spirit and to the proper authority? For example, it would be pointless to complain to the police about a heavy tax burden or to a judge about one's physical ailments. So, too, it would be inappropriate to complain about some situation either inside or outside the congregation to a person that had no authority or ability to help.

In most lands today, there are courts and other appropriate authorities that can be appealed to in hopes of gaining a measure

Elders listen to and act upon just complaints

of relief. When the student mentioned in the beginning of the article took his complaint to court, the judges ruled in his favor, and he was reinstated with an apology from the school. Similarly, the female worker who was sexually harassed found relief through a working-women's union. She received an apology from the school board. Her employers took steps to stop sexual harassment.

It should not be expected, however, that all complaints will have the same outcome. Wise King Solomon realistically observed: "That which is made crooked cannot be made straight." (Ecclesiastes 1:15) We do well to recognize that some matters will simply have to wait for God to rectify in his own due time.



The Ten Commandments

ENGLAND'S bishop of Gloucester discovered that more than half the clergymen in his diocese could not repeat the Ten Commandments, and 10 percent of them did not know where to find them in the Bible. But that was 450 years ago. Has the situation improved since then? Hardly—as a recent *Sunday Times* random survey of Anglican clergymen revealed.

Of the 200 clerics interviewed, only 34 percent could cite all Ten Commandments. Among the rest, one felt they were too negative, and another dismissed them as not being relevant to modern moral challenges.

Do you know the Ten Commandments or where to find them? They are recorded in Exodus, the second book of the Bible, the first 17 verses of chapter 20. Why not read them? Here is a simple way to group them. The *first four* relate to our worship of God, the *fifth* highlights family life, numbers *six through nine* concern our relationship with our fellowman, and the

tenth is unique, causing us to search our own hearts, to check our motives. Here is a brief summary of how Christians might apply the principles.

First: Give our Creator exclusive devotion. **Second:** Do not use images in worship. **Third:** Always respect and dignify God's name. **Fourth:** Allow time to concentrate on spiritual matters, without distraction. **Fifth:** Children, respect your parents. **Sixth:** Do not murder. **Seventh:** Avoid adultery. **Eighth:** Do not steal. **Ninth:** Tell the truth. **Tenth:** Shun covetousness.

The Ten Commandments were part of the code of laws given to Moses. But the principles they embody are timeless. (Romans 6:14; Colossians 2:13, 14) For this reason, Jesus' followers quoted from and referred to the Ten Commandments. (Romans 13:8-10) How much happier—and safer—life would be today if all respected and lived by these divinely inspired principles!