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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Beware of Ridiculers!

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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Beware of Ridiculers!

Today, predictions abound, and the futurology business is booming. "As the year 2000 draws closer," observes *The Daily Telegraph* of London, "something strange and yet not totally unexpected is happening. Thousands of people around the world are experiencing bizarre and often terrifying visions of the future." To many observers this intense interest in the future is merely a repetition of previously hoped-for changes that did not materialize.

AS HORSE-DRAWN traffic increased in the 19th century, one man predicted that European cities would eventually suffocate in manure. Of course, his prediction proved to be false. Thus, in calling attention to the way predictions frequently fail, *The Times* of London stated: "The future is just a load of horse manure."

Others ridicule those who see danger ahead. For example, one professor of business at a U.S. university challenged those who warn of environmental degradation to wager whether the trend would worsen. As reported in the *New Scientist* magazine, he claims that "our quality of life is improving and will continue to do so indefinitely."

Amid the confusion of claims and counterclaims, many believe that everything will remain basically unchanged. Ridiculing any thought of divine

intervention in human affairs, they show an attitude like that of ridiculers in the first century C.E.

Is Everything Still the Same?

The second inspired letter of the Christian apostle Peter, penned about 64 C.E., warned: "In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires."—2 Peter 3:3.

Ridiculers seek to make the object of their ridicule appear ludicrous. The person who succumbs to ridicule may be falling into a selfish trap because the ridiculer often wants those who listen to adopt his viewpoint. Perhaps some of the ridiculers of whom Peter warned were like this, "proceeding according to their own desires." In alerting his readers, the apostle used an emphatic form of expression. He warned of the arrival of "*ridiculers* with their *ridicule*."

"The days will come upon you, when your enemies will . . . encircle you and distress you from every side, . . . and they will not leave a stone upon a stone in you." That was not a warning to be ridiculed. The Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem, with widespread loss of life.

Those first-century ridiculers questioned the reality of Christ's "promised presence," saying: "Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning." (2 Peter 3:4) It appeared that way to them. Yet, back in the year 33 C.E., Jesus had foretold catastrophe for the city of Jerusalem. "The days will come upon you," he declared, "when your enemies will build around you a fortification with pointed stakes and will encircle you and distress you from every side, and they will dash you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave a stone upon a stone in you." How mistaken were those who ridiculed that warning! In 70 C.E., the Roman armies besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the city, with widespread loss of life to its inhabitants. Why were the majority of the city's inhabitants not prepared for this disaster? Because they had not discerned that God had inspected them through his Son, Jesus.—Luke 19:43, 44.

The apostle Peter refers to a future intervention by God Almighty. "Jehovah's day will come as a thief," Peter warns. (2 Peter 3:10) At that time God will remove the ungodly from the entire globe and spare those who are judged to be righteous. As this journal has frequently explained, Christ Jesus' "presence" began in 1914. But his taking action as God's Executioner to remove wickedness is yet future. Consequently, the apostle's warning to beware of ridiculers applies now with greater urgency.

You may already have waited a long time for divine intervention in man's affairs. What will help you to continue to wait patiently without becoming the prey of ridiculers? Please read on.

Wait Patiently

Wolf: *Animals*/Jim Harter/Dover Publications, Inc.; young shepherd: *Children: A Pictorial Archive from Nineteenth-Century Sources*/Grafton/Dover Publications, Inc.

THE shepherd who repeatedly cried "Wolf!" when there was no wolf found that his subsequent cry for help went unheeded. Similarly today, many disregard the imminence of Jehovah's day because they have heard countless warnings that have proved to be false alarms. The very fact that so many fail to discern which warning is genuine and then heed it plays into the hands of God's great enemy, Satan, that false "angel of light."—2 Corinthians 11:14.

A spirit of complacency would be dangerous even for those who have served Jehovah for some time. Why? Consider the warning by the apostle Peter in the first century.

Think Clearly

Peter's second inspired letter was a reminder to the early Christians, and it is to us as well. "Beloved ones," he writes, "this is now the second letter I am writing you, in which, as in my first one, I am arousing your clear thinking faculties by way of a reminder." (2 Peter 3:1) What basis does Peter have for this concern? Peter highlights the presence of ridiculers whose ridicule undermines the needed sense of urgency respecting the time in which God's servants live. Now is the time to beware of being duped by scoffers. Peter thus urges his readers to "remember the sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets." (2 Peter 3:2; Acts 3:22, 23) What had the prophets said?

God's faithful servants had on many occasions called attention to how divine judgments brought an end to wickedness. Peter reminds his readers of the Flood of Noah's day that God used as a means to intervene when the earth was filled with badness. That torrential Deluge effectively ended the world of that time. But God preserved Noah and his family in an ark along with representative living creatures "of every sort of flesh." Universal legends testify to the truthfulness of the Biblical account.*—Genesis 6:19; 2 Peter 3:5, 6.

Peter calls that divine intervention 'a fact that escapes the notice' of some people. Then others were lulled into complacency by the ridiculers of the day. We, though, must never lose sight of what Jehovah has already done. Peter tells us: "By the same word the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7) Yes, divine intervention is to occur again.

God Is Not Slow

Millenniums of time have already passed. Why has God waited so long to solve mankind's problems? Again, Peter focuses on another fact. He says: "Let this one fact not be escaping your notice, beloved ones, that one day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and

* Please see the book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?*, page 116, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8) Jehovah's view of time differs from ours. To the eternal God, the period from Adam's creation until now does not even amount to a week. But whatever view of time we have, each millennium and each day that passes bring us nearer to the outworking of Jehovah's purpose.

"A watched pot never boils" is a saying that implies that simply waiting for an event seems to defer its occurrence. However, Peter recommends "awaiting *and keeping close in mind* the presence of the day of Jehovah." (2 Peter 3:12) How can we develop a mental attitude that keeps us alert to the imminence of divine intervention?

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Peter focuses attention on deeds and actions. He refers to "holy acts of conduct" as well as "deeds of godly devotion." (2 Peter 3:11) What do these involve?

The real servant of God acts in a way that pleases Him. The faith of such a true worshiper is reflected in his conduct. This distinguishes him from those who merely *speak* of belief in God and his promises. Perhaps you have noticed that the public ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses sets them apart as different. They call at your home to draw attention to God's promises outlined in the Bible. But they also bear witness to their hopes and beliefs wherever they meet people.

The Witness who busies himself declaring his faith to others has his beliefs reinforced and strengthened. Expression deepens impression and at the same time brings inner joy and contentment. When we announce the good news of God's Kingdom, we are pleasing Jehovah too. We know that he is 'not unrighteous so as to forget our work and the love we show for his name,' as Peter's fellow apostle Paul declares.—Hebrews 6:10; Romans 10:9, 10.

What is the result of this preoccupation with spreading the Kingdom good news during the dying days of this present wicked system? Hundreds of thousands of honest-hearted people are learning how to come into a close relationship with Jehovah, to benefit from his undeserved kindness and find true happiness in the prospect of eternal life on a paradise earth.

Advance Knowledge

Although we know from the Bible that Jehovah God will intervene at his due time, we need to heed a further warning that Peter gives. "Having this advance knowledge, be on your guard that you may not be led away with them by the error of the law-defying people and fall from your own steadfastness."—2 Peter 3:17.

Jehovah surely knew in advance that some who lack strong faith could become discouraged by the seeming delay of divine intervention. He also knew that the influence of ungodly people could corrupt his true servants or, at the least, undermine their belief that the sanctification of God's name is near. How tragic it would be to fall from steadfastness in these final days!

Now is no time to harbor doubts or uncertainty about what Jehovah will do. (Hebrews 12:1) Rather, now is the time to grow in appreciation of what Jehovah's patience has brought—the prospect of salvation to millions who become part of the international great crowd and look forward to surviving the coming great tribulation. (Revelation 7:9, 14) Peter exhorts: "Go on growing in the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity."—2 Peter 3:18.

"Keep Yourselves in God's Love"

Being busy in Kingdom preaching and regularly attending Christian meetings for

Learn now about God's promise of Paradise

worship and study of God's Word offer us protection. Thus, we will not have time to become overly concerned about the deteriorating conditions in today's wicked system. Fears and anxieties need have little place in the life of true Christians. (1 Corinthians 15: 58) The busier we are serving Jehovah, the quicker time passes.

Jude, who was Peter's contemporary and the half brother of Jesus, exhorts us: "You, beloved ones, by building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying with holy spirit, keep yourselves in God's love, while you are waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ with everlasting life in view." (Jude 20, 21) Notice the importance of a positive attitude that is fostered by perseverance in prayer. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Jude then adds: "Continue showing mercy to some that have doubts; save them by snatching them out of the fire. But continue showing mercy to others, doing so with fear, while you hate even the inner garment that has been stained by the flesh." (Jude 22, 23) How vital it is to strengthen one another during these difficult times! And how important it is not to fall into temptation, using this extended "day of salvation" as an excuse for "loose conduct," now so prevalent in today's morally corrupt world.—Jude 4; 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2.

By heeding the loving counsel of Peter, Paul, and Jude and by being busy and active in God's service, you can wait patiently on Jehovah's intervention. But will you?

Do not hesitate to contact the Witnesses in your locality for help to strengthen your faith in the Creator's promise of everlasting life. Learn what is required to qualify to share in this never-to-be-repeated global witness work that will be concluded at the approaching great tribulation. (Mark 13:10) You will then have the prospect of living in the new world of righteousness that Jehovah promises. (2 Peter 3:13) Heed his reminders! Wait patiently! Be busy!

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Using Every Opportunity

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES are known worldwide for their Bible educational work. But they also conduct programs that bring other benefits to society. This public service has been well received, as the following experiences from Ecuador show.

☐ The management of a large glass factory wanted to organize a course on family values for their employees. The director of human resources invited several Catholic priests to participate but had no response. One priest told him that so few priests were qualified to talk on the subject that likely no one would be available. On hearing this, a Witness employee made arrangements for a brother who often works business territory to visit the factory.

The very next day, the Witness approached the director of human resources with a proposed study course. A list of subjects was drawn from various publications of the Watch Tower Society. The director was impressed. He selected three topics for discussion—human relations, ethics at work, and ethics in the family. Arrangements were then made to consider the information with the entire work force.

The employees were divided into seven groups of 30 each, after which three qualified brothers presented the information to them. What were the results? Quite a number of employees asked to be called on in their homes, and 216 Bible study aids were placed. The management was so impressed that they asked if the Witnesses could prepare another series of discourses.

☐ Recently, Ecuador passed a law that allows religion to be taught in school. A missionary sister called on a female superintendent of a primary school and asked how the new law was working. The superintendent explained that an attempt was made to start a program on the worship of Mary but nothing ever came of it. When the sister remarked that such worship could present problems for non-Catholic children, the superintendent

agreed. "On the other hand," the missionary said, "we have a program for teaching moral principles from the Bible that does not oblige a person to accept a particular religion." The superintendent replied: "When can you come? The day after tomorrow?" After the missionary showed her the book *Listening to the Great Teacher*, it was decided that they would consider the chapter "Happy Are the Peaceable."

Upon her return, the missionary spent three hours visiting seven different classrooms with the superintendent listening in. After a session with a fifth-grade class, one of the students said: "Miss, please be sure to visit the sixth grade. They're always trying to beat up on us and start a fight!" One teacher remarked: "Violence is such an important topic. We need more time to discuss this matter."

Arrangements were made for return visits to the school to discuss such themes as obedience and lying. Thus far, the results have been very positive. Now when the missionary sister walks down the street, the children come running to greet her and ask Bible questions. Others proudly introduce her to their parents. Additionally, a home Bible study has been started with two of the schoolchildren.

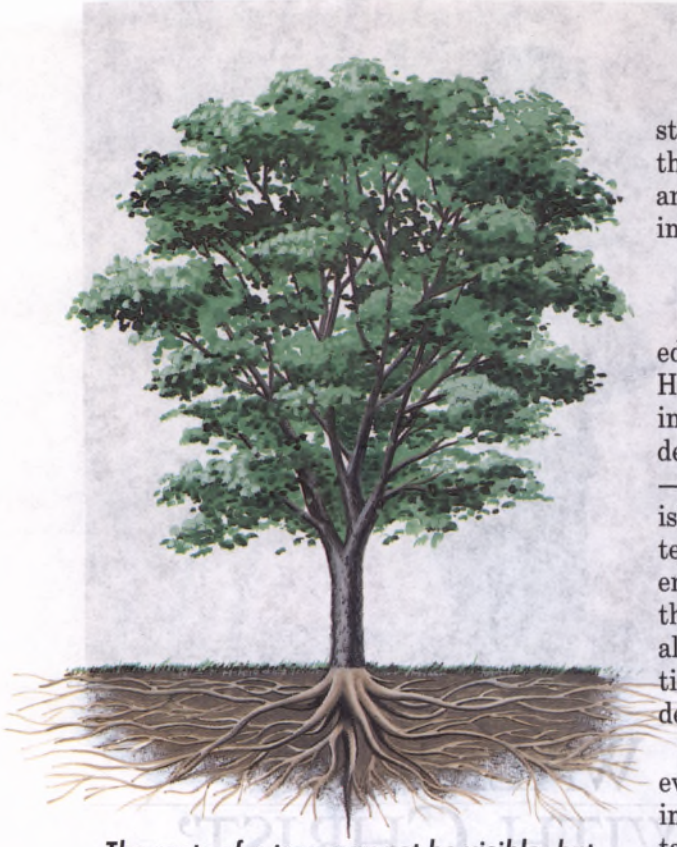
'GO ON WALKING IN UNION WITH CHRIST'

"Therefore, as you have accepted Christ Jesus the Lord, go on walking in union with him."—COLOSSIANS 2:6.

HAVE you ever watched a small boy walking with his father? The little fellow imitates his father's every move, his face glowing with admiration; the father helps him along, his own face lit with love and approval. Fittingly, Jehovah uses just such a picture to describe a life of faithful service to him. For example, God's Word says that the faithful man Enoch "kept walking with the [true] God." —Genesis 5:24; 6:9.

1, 2. (a) How does the Bible describe Enoch's life of faithful service to Jehovah? (b) How has Jehovah helped us to walk with him, as Colossians 2:6, 7 indicates?

2 Just as a considerate father would help his young son to walk with him, Jehovah has given us the best possible aid. He sent his only-begotten Son to the earth. In every step of his lifelong walk here on earth, Jesus Christ perfectly reflected his heavenly Father. (John 14:9, 10; Hebrews 1:3) So in order to walk with God, we need to walk with Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote: "Therefore, as you have accepted Christ Jesus the Lord, go on walking in union with him, rooted and being built up in him and being stabilized in the faith, just as you were taught, overflowing with faith in thanksgiving."—Colossians 2:6, 7.



The roots of a tree may not be visible, but they supply food to it and anchor it firmly

[3] Because they want to walk in union with Christ, endeavoring to follow his perfect steps, honesthearted Bible students get baptized. (Luke 3:21; Hebrews 10:7-9) Worldwide, in 1997 alone, over 375,000 took this vital step—an average of over 1,000 each day. This increase is thrilling! However, Paul's words recorded at Colossians 2:6, 7 show that there is more to walking in union with Christ than simply getting baptized. The Greek verb rendered "go on walking" describes an action that must be continuous, ongoing. Further, Paul adds that walking with Christ involves four things: being rooted in Christ, being built up in him, being stabilized in the faith, and overflowing with thanksgiving. Let us consider each phrase and see how it helps us to continue walking in union with Christ.

3. According to Colossians 2:6, 7, why can we say that there is more to walking in union with Christ than simply getting baptized?

Are You 'Rooted in Christ'?

[4] First, Paul writes, we need to be 'rooted in Christ.' (Compare Matthew 13:20, 21.) How can a person work toward being rooted in Christ? Well, the roots of a plant are hidden from view, but they are vital to the plant —they give it stability and supply it nourishment. Similarly, Christ's example and teaching affect us first invisibly, becoming embedded in our minds and hearts. There they nourish and strengthen us. When we allow them to govern our thinking, our actions, and our decisions, we are moved to dedicate our lives to Jehovah.—1 Peter 2:21.

[5] Jesus loved the knowledge from God. He even likened it to food. (Matthew 4:4) Why, in his Sermon on the Mount, he made 21 quotations from eight different books of the Hebrew Scriptures. To follow his example, we must do as the apostle Peter exhorts—"form a longing" for spiritual food "as newborn infants." (1 Peter 2:2) When a newborn infant longs for nourishment, he leaves no doubt about his intense longing. If we do not at present feel that way about spiritual food, Peter's words encourage us to "form" that longing. How? The principle found at Psalm 34:8 may help: "Taste and see that Jehovah is good." If we regularly "taste" of Jehovah's Word, the Bible, perhaps reading a portion of it each day, we will see that it is spiritually nourishing and good. In time, our longing for it will grow.

[6] However, it is important to digest food

4. What does it mean to be 'rooted in Christ'?
5. How can we "form a longing" for spiritual food?
6. Why is it important to meditate on what we read?

well once we have taken it in. So we need to meditate on what we read. (Psalm 77:11, 12) For example, as we read the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived,* each chapter takes on greater value if we stop and ask ourselves: 'What facet of Christ's personality do I see in this account, and how can I imitate it in my own life?' Meditating that way will enable us to apply what we learn. Then, when faced with a decision, we may ask ourselves what Jesus might have done. If we make our decision accordingly, we give evidence of being truly rooted in Christ.

[7] Paul also urges us to take in "solid food," the deeper truths of God's Word. (Hebrews 5:14) Reading the entire Bible might be our first goal in this regard. Then there are more specific topics of study, such as the ransom sacrifice of Christ, the various covenants that Jehovah made with his people, or some of the prophetic messages in the Bible. There is an abundance of material that will help us absorb and digest such solid spiritual food. What is the goal of taking in such knowledge? It is, not to give us reason for boasting, but to build our love of Jehovah and draw us closer to him. (1 Corinthians 8:1; James 4:8) If we hungrily take in this knowledge, apply it to ourselves, and use it to help others, we will truly be imitating Christ. This will help us to be properly rooted in him.

Are You 'Being Built Up in Christ'?

[8] For the next aspect of walking in union with Christ, Paul shifts quickly from one visual image to another—from that of a plant to that of a building. When we think of a building under construction, we think of not just the foundation but also the edifice that rises up in plain view, through much hard work. Similarly, we have to do a lot of hard work to build qualities and habits that are Christlike. Such hard work does not go unnoticed, even as Paul wrote to Timothy: 'Let your advancement be made manifest to all persons.' (1 Timothy 4:15; Matthew 5:16) What are some Christian works that build us up?

[9] Jesus assigned us to preach and to teach the good news. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) He set the perfect example, witnessing boldly and effectively. Of course, we will never do as well as he did. However, the apostle Peter sets this goal for us: "Sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts, always ready to make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you, but doing so together with a mild temper and deep respect." (1 Peter 3:15) If you do not feel that you are "always ready to make a defense," do not despair. Set reasonable goals that will help you to inch closer to that standard. Advance preparation may enable you to vary your presentation or include a scripture or two. You might set goals to place more Bible literature, to make more return visits, or to start a Bible study. The emphasis should not be strictly on quantity—as in the number of hours, placements, or studies—but on quality. Setting reasonable goals and reaching out to attain them can help us to enjoy giving of ourselves in the ministry. That is what Jehovah wants—for us to serve him "with rejoicing."—Psalm 100:2; compare 2 Corinthians 9:7.

[10] There are also works that we perform in the congregation that build us up in Christ. The most important is that of showing love for one another, for this is the identifying

7. What should be our view of solid spiritual nourishment?
8. What does it mean to be 'built up in Christ'?
9. (a) In order to imitate Christ in our ministry, what are some practical goals we might set? (b) How do we know that Jehovah wants us to enjoy our ministry?
10. What are some other Christian works that we need to perform, and how do these help us?

mark of true Christians. (John 13:34, 35) While we are yet studying, many of us become attached to our teacher, as is only natural. However, could we now follow Paul's counsel to "widen out" by getting to know others in the congregation? (2 Corinthians 6: 13) The elders too need our love and appreciation. By cooperating with them, seeking and accepting their Scriptural counsel, we will make their hard work that much easier. (Hebrews 13:17) At the same time, this will contribute to our being built up in Christ.

11 Baptism is an exciting occasion! However, we should not expect every moment of life thereafter to be equally thrilling. A large part of our being built up in Christ involves "walking orderly in this same routine." (Philippians 3:16) That does not mean a dull, boring life-style. It simply means walking ahead in a straight line—in other words, building up good spiritual habits and keeping to them day by day, year in and year out. Remember, "he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved."—Matthew 24:13.

Are You "Being Stabilized in the Faith"?

12 In his third phrase describing our walk in union with Christ, Paul urges us to be "stabilized in the faith." One version reads, "confirmed regarding the faith," for the Greek word Paul used can mean "to confirm, guarantee, and make irrevocable legally." As we grow in knowledge, we are given further reasons to see that our faith in Jehovah God is well-founded and, in fact, is legally established. The result is an increase in our stability. It becomes increasingly difficult for Satan's world to sway us. This reminds us of Paul's admonition to "press on to maturity." (Hebrews 6:1) Maturity and stability go hand in hand.

13 The first-century Christians in Colossae faced threats to their stability. Paul warned: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ." (Colossians 2:8) Paul did not want the Colossians, who had become subjects in "the kingdom of the Son of [God's] love," to be carried off, led away from their blessed spiritual state. (Colossians 1:13) Misled by what means? Paul pointed to "philosophy," the only time this word occurs in the Bible. Was he talking about the Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Socrates? Although these posed a threat to true Christians, in those days, the word "philosophy" had a broad usage. It commonly referred to many groups and schools of thought—even religious ones. For instance, such first-century Jews as Josephus and Philo called their own religion a philosophy —perhaps to add to its appeal.

14 Some philosophies that may have concerned Paul were of a religious nature. Later in the same chapter of his letter to the Colossians, he addressed those who taught, "Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch," thereby alluding to features of the Mosaic Law that were terminated by Christ's death. (Romans 10:4) Along with pagan philosophies, influences were at work that threatened the spirituality of the congregation. (Colossians 2: 20-22) Paul warned against philosophy that was part of "the elementary things of the world." Such false instruction was of human origin.

11. What realistic view should we take of baptism?
12. What does it mean to be "stabilized in the faith"?
13, 14. (a) The first-century Christians at Colossae faced what threats to their stability? (b) What may have concerned the apostle Paul?

[15] The promoting of human ideas and thinking not based solidly on God's Word can pose a threat to Christian stability. We today must be wary of such threats. The apostle John urged: "Beloved ones, do not believe every inspired expression, but test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God." (1 John 4:1) So if a schoolmate tries to convince you that living by Bible standards is old-fashioned, or if a neighbor tends to influence you to adopt a materialistic attitude, or if a coworker subtly pressures you to violate your Bible-trained conscience, or even if a fellow believer voices critical, negative comments about others in the congregation based on his own opinion, do not just absorb what they say. Screen out what does not harmonize with God's Word. As we do so, we will maintain our stability as we walk in union with Christ.

"Overflowing With Faith in Thanksgiving"

[16] The fourth aspect of walking in union with Christ that Paul mentions is that we be "overflowing with faith in thanksgiving." (Colossians 2:7) The word "overflowing" brings to mind a river that is overflowing its banks. This suggests that for us as Christians, our thanksgiving is to be a continual or a habitual thing. Each of us may well ask, 'Am I thankful?'

[17] Really, we all have ample reason to overflow with thanks to Jehovah every day. Even in the worst of times, there may be some simple things that provide moments of relief. A friend shows empathy. A loved one offers a reassuring touch. A good night's rest proves restorative. A tasty meal quells pangs of hunger. A bird's song, a child's laugh, a glistening blue sky, a refreshing breeze—all of these and more may come our way in a single day. It is only too easy to take such gifts for granted. Are they not all worthy of a thank-you? They all come from Jehovah, the Source of "every good gift and every perfect present." (James 1:17) And he has given us gifts that dwarf these—life itself, for example. (Psalm 36:9) Further, he has given us an opportunity to live forever. In order to provide this gift, Jehovah made the supreme sacrifice by sending his only-begotten Son, "the one he was specially fond of."—Proverbs 8:30; John 3:16.

[18] How true, then, the psalmist's words: "It is good to give thanks to Jehovah." (Psalm 92:1) In a similar vein, Paul reminded the Christians in Thessalonica: "In connection with everything give thanks." (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:15) Each of us might resolve to be more thankful. Our prayers need not consist solely of

15. How can we avoid being swayed by the unscriptural thinking that often comes our way?

16. What is the fourth aspect of walking in union with Christ, and what question might we ask?

17. (a) Why may it be said that we all have much for which to be thankful, even during hard times? (b) What are some gifts from Jehovah for which you feel especially thankful?

18. How may we show ourselves thankful to Jehovah?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What is involved in walking in union with Christ?
- ☐ What does it mean to be 'rooted in Christ'?
- ☐ How may we be 'built up in Christ'?
- ☐ Why is it so important to be "stabilized in the faith"?
- ☐ What reasons do we have to 'overflow with thanksgiving'?

petitions to God regarding our needs. These are fine in their place. But imagine having a friend who only talked to you when he needed something from you! So why not pray to Jehovah just to thank and praise him? How such prayers must please him when he looks down on this ungrateful world! A secondary benefit is that such prayers may help us to focus on the positive aspects of life, reminding us of how blessed we really are.

[19] Is it not remarkable how much wise guidance can be drawn from a single passage of God's Word? Paul's counsel to continue walking with Christ is something each of us should want to take to heart. Let us be resolved then to be 'rooted in Christ,' "built up in him," "stabilized in the faith," and 'overflowing with thankfulness.' Such counsel is particularly vital to those newly baptized. But it applies to us all. Think of how a taproot grows down more and more and how a building under construction goes up more and more. So our walk with Christ never ends. There is ample room for growth. Jehovah will help us and bless us, for he wants us to go on walking with him and with his beloved Son unendingly.

19. How does Paul's language at Colossians 2:6, 7 suggest that we all may continue to improve in walking with Christ?

"PUT UP A HARD FIGHT FOR THE FAITH"!

"Put up a hard fight for the faith that was once for all time delivered to the holy ones."—JUDE 3.

SOLDIERS at war have always had a hard lot. Imagine donning full battle gear and marching countless miles in all kinds of weather, undergoing grueling training in the use of weaponry, or having to defend yourself against all manner of violent threats to life and limb. True Christians, however, do not take part in the wars of the nations. (Isaiah 2:2-4; John 17:14) Still, we must never forget that we are all at war in a sense. Satan is full of hatred for Jesus Christ and his followers on the earth. (Revelation 12:17) All who decide to serve Jehovah God are, in effect, enlisting as soldiers to wage spiritual warfare.—2 Corinthians 10:4.

[2] Fittingly, Jesus' half brother Jude writes: "Beloved ones, though I was making every effort to write you about the salvation we hold in common, I found it necessary to write you to exhort you to put up a hard fight for the faith that was once for all time delivered to the holy ones." (Jude 3) When Jude urges Christians to "put up a hard

1. In what sense are true Christians today engaged in warfare?

2. How does Jude describe Christian warfare, and how can his letter help us endure in it?

Unlike Roman soldiers, Christians wage a spiritual warfare

fight," he uses a term related to the word for "agony." Yes, this fight can be difficult, even agonizing! Do you sometimes find it hard to endure in this warfare? Jude's short but powerful letter can help us. It urges us to resist immorality, to respect divinely constituted authority, and to keep ourselves in God's love. Let us see how to apply this counsel.

Resist Immorality

[3] Jude could see that not all of his fellow Christians were winning the war against Satan. An emergency situation faced the flock. Corrupt men had "slipped in," writes Jude. These men were subtly promoting immorality. And they cleverly rationalized their deeds, "turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct." (Jude 4) Perhaps, like some ancient Gnostics, they reasoned that the more one sinned, the more one could receive of God's grace—so, in effect, it was better to sin more! Or perhaps they figured that a kind God would never punish them. In any case, they were wrong.—1 Corinthians 3:19.

[4] Jude refutes their wicked reasonings by citing three examples of Jehovah's judgments in times past: against the Israelites who were "not showing faith"; against the "angels that . . . forsook their own proper dwelling place" in order to sin with women; and against the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, who "had committed fornication excessively and gone out after flesh for unnatural use." (Jude 5-7; Genesis 6:2-4; 19:4-25; Numbers 14:35) In each case, Jehovah brought a resounding judgment against the sinners.

[5] Later, Jude refers to an even more far-reaching judgment. He quotes a prophecy

3. What emergency situation faced the Christian congregation in Jude's day?
4. What three Scriptural examples of Jehovah's past judgments does Jude cite?

5. From what ancient prophet does Jude quote, and how did that prophecy express the absolute certainty of its fulfillment?

of Enoch—a passage that is not found anywhere else in the inspired Scriptures.* (Jude 14, 15) Enoch foretold a time when Jehovah would judge all the ungodly and their ungodly deeds. Interestingly, Enoch spoke in the past tense, for God's judgments were as certain as if they had already taken place. People may have scoffed at Enoch and later at Noah, but all such ridiculers drowned in the global Deluge.

6 Why did Jude write of these divine judgments? Because he knew that some who were associated with the Christian congregations in his own day were committing sins just as filthy and reprehensible as the ones that provoked those past judgments. Thus, Jude writes that the congregations need to be reminded of some basic spiritual truths. (Jude 5) They had evidently forgotten that Jehovah God saw what they were doing. Yes, when his servants deliberately violate his laws, defiling themselves and others, he sees. (Proverbs 15:3) Such acts hurt him deeply. (Genesis 6:6; Psalm 78:40) It is an awesome thought that we mere humans can affect the feelings of the Sovereign Lord of the universe. He watches us daily, and when we do our very best to follow the footsteps of his Son, Jesus Christ, then our conduct makes his heart rejoice. Let us, then, never resent such reminders as Jude offers but take them to heart.—Proverbs 27:11; 1 Peter 2:21.

* Some researchers assert that Jude is quoting from the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*. However, R. C. H. Lenski notes: "We ask: 'What is the source of this patchwork, the *Book of Enoch?*' This book is an accretion, and nobody is sure of the dates of its various parts . . . ; nobody can be sure that some of its expressions were not, perhaps, taken from Jude himself."

6. (a) Of what did the Christians in Jude's day need to be reminded? (b) Why should we take Jude's reminders to heart?

7 Not only does Jehovah see but he acts. A God of justice, he brings punishment upon evildoers—sooner or later. (1 Timothy 5:24) Those who reason that his judgments are just ancient history and that he is not concerned with the evil they do are merely fooling themselves. How crucial it is for any today who are involved in immorality to seek help immediately from Christian elders! (James 5:14, 15) All of us may be sobered by the threat that immorality poses in our spiritual warfare. Every year there are casualties—individuals who are expelled from our midst, the majority of them for unrepentantly committing immoral acts. We must firmly resolve to resist any temptations that even begin to lead us in such a direction.—Compare Matthew 26:41.

Respect Divinely Constituted Authority

8 Another problem that Jude addresses is the lack of respect for divinely constituted authority. For instance, in verse 8 he charges the same wicked men with "speaking abusively of glorious ones." Who were these "glorious ones"? They were imperfect men, but they had responsibilities conferred upon them by Jehovah's holy spirit. For example, the congregations had elders, who were charged with shepherding the flock of God. (1 Peter 5:2) There were traveling overseers too, such as the apostle Paul. And the body of elders in Jerusalem acted as a governing body, making decisions affecting the Christian congregation as a whole. (Acts 15:6) Jude was deeply con-

7. (a) Why is it crucial for those involved in serious wrongdoing to seek help immediately? (b) How can all of us avoid immorality?
8. Who were the "glorious ones" mentioned in Jude 8?

cerned that certain ones in the congregations were speaking abusively of, or blaspheming, such men.

[9] To denounce such disrespectful talk, in verse 11, Jude cites three more examples as reminders: Cain, Balaam, and Korah. Cain ignored Jehovah's loving counsel and willfully pursued his own course of murderous hatred. (Genesis 4:4-8) Balaam received repeated warnings that unquestionably came from a supernatural source—even his own she-ass spoke to him! But Balaam selfishly continued to plot against God's people. (Numbers 22:28, 32-34; Deuteronomy 23:5) Korah had his own position of responsibility, but it was not enough. He fomented rebellion against the meekest man on the earth, Moses.—Numbers 12:3; 16:1-3, 32.

[10] How vividly these examples teach us to listen to counsel and to respect those whom Jehovah uses in positions of responsibility! (Hebrews 13:17) It is all too easy to find fault with the appointed elders, for they are imperfect, as all of us are imperfect. But if we dwell on their faults and undermine respect for them, might we be "speaking abusively of glorious ones"? In verse 10, Jude mentions those who "are speaking abusively of all the things they really do not know." Some will, at times, criticize a decision made by a body of elders or a judicial committee. Yet, they are not privy to all the details that the elders had to consider in order to reach a decision. So why speak abusively about things they really do not know? (Proverbs 18:13) Those who persist in such negative talk could cause divisions in the congregation and perhaps even be likened to dangerous "rocks hidden below water" at gatherings of fellow believers. (Jude 12, 16, 19) Never would we want to pose a spiritual danger to others. Rather, let each of us resolve to appreciate responsible men for their hard work and devotion to the flock of God.—1 Timothy 5:17.

[11] Jude cites an example of one who respected duly constituted authority. He writes: "When Michael the archangel had a difference with the Devil and was disputing about Moses' body, he did not dare to bring a judgment against him in abusive terms, but said: 'May Jehovah rebuke you.'" (Jude 9) This fascinating account, unique to Jude in the inspired Scriptures, teaches two distinct lessons. On the one hand, it teaches us to leave judgment with Jehovah. Satan evidently wanted to misuse the body of the faithful man Moses in order to promote false worship. How wicked! Yet, Michael humbly refrained from bringing a judgment, for only Jehovah had that authority. How much more, then, should we refrain from judging faithful men who are trying to serve Jehovah.

[12] On the other hand, those with a measure of authority in the congregation may also learn a lesson from Michael. After all, though Michael was the "archangel," chief of all the angels, he did not abuse his position of power, even under provocation. Faithful elders follow that example closely, recognizing that abuse of their authority is disrespectful of Jehovah's sovereignty. Jude's letter had much to say about men who had positions of respect in the congregations but had come to abuse their power. For instance, in verses 12 through 14, Jude

9. What examples regarding disrespect for authority does Jude cite?

10. How might some today fall into the trap of "speaking abusively of glorious ones," and why should such talk be avoided?

11. Why did Michael refrain from bringing a judgment in abusive terms against Satan?

12. What might those with responsible positions in the Christian congregation learn from Michael's example?

Christian shepherds serve, not out of selfishness, but out of love

pens a blistering denunciation of "shepherds that feed themselves without fear." (Compare Ezekiel 34:7-10.) In other words, their first interest was in benefiting themselves, not Jehovah's flock. Elders today can learn much from such negative examples. Really, Jude's words here paint a vivid picture of what we do *not* want to become. When we give in to selfishness, we cannot be soldiers of Christ; we are too busy fighting for self. Let us all, rather, live by Jesus' words: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

"Keep Yourselves in God's Love"

13 Toward the end of his letter, Jude offers this heartwarming counsel: "Keep yourselves in God's love." (Jude 21) Nothing will help us to wage the Christian warfare more than this one thing, remaining the objects of Jehovah God's love. After all, love is Jehovah's dominant quality. (1 John 4:8) Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: "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 8:38, 39) How, though, do we remain in that love? Notice three of the measures we can take, according to Jude.

13. Why should we all earnestly desire to remain in God's love?

14 First, Jude tells us to continue building ourselves up on our "most holy faith." (Jude 20) As we saw in the preceding article, this is a continuous process. We are like buildings that need more and more fortification against the worsening onslaught of the elements. (Compare Matthew 7:24, 25.) So let us never become overconfident. Rather, let us see where we can build ourselves up on the foundation of our faith, becoming stronger, more faithful soldiers of Christ. For example, we might consider the parts of the spiritual suit of armor described at Ephesians 6:11-18.

14, 15. (a) What does it mean to build ourselves up on our "most holy faith"? (b) How might we examine the condition of our spiritual armor?

15 What is the condition of our own spiritual armor? Is our "large shield of faith" as strong as it needs to be? As we look back over recent years, do we see some signs of slacking off, such as dwindling meeting attendance, loss of zeal for the ministry, or fading enthusiasm for personal study? Such signs are serious! We need to act now to build up and strengthen ourselves in the truth.—1 Timothy 4:15; 2 Timothy 4:2; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

16 A second way to remain in God's love is to continue "praying with holy spirit." (Jude 20) That means to pray under the influence of Jehovah's spirit and in harmony with his spirit-inspired Word. Prayer is a vital means of drawing close to Jehovah personally and expressing our devotion to him. Never should we neglect this marvelous privilege! And when we pray, we may ask—in fact, keep asking—for holy spirit. (Luke 11:13) It is the strongest force available to us. With such help, we can always remain in God's love and endure as soldiers of Christ.

17 Third, Jude urges us to continue showing mercy. (Jude 22) His own example in this regard is remarkable. After all, he was rightly disturbed over the corruption, immorality, and apostasy creeping into the Christian congregation. Nevertheless, he did not succumb to panic, adopting the view that the times were somehow too dangerous to show such a "soft" quality as mercy. No, he urged his brothers to continue to show mercy whenever possible, reasoning kindly with those suffering from doubts and even 'snatching from the fire' those straying close to serious sin. (Jude 23; Galatians 6:1) What fine exhortation for elders in these troubled times! They too endeavor to show mercy wherever there is a basis for it, while still being firm when necessary. All of us likewise want to show mercy to one another. For example, instead of nursing petty grudges, we can be generous with our forgiveness.—Colossians 3:13.

18 The war we wage is not an easy one. As Jude says, it is "a hard fight." (Jude 3) Our enemies are powerful. Not only Satan but his wicked world and our own imperfections all range up against us. Yet, we can be absolutely confident of victory! Why? Because we are on Jehovah's side. Jude closes his letter with a reminder that Jehovah is rightly attributed "glory, majesty, might and authority for all past eternity and now and into all eternity." (Jude 25) Is that not an awe-inspiring thought? Can there be any question, then, that this same God "is able to guard you from stumbling"? (Jude 24) Certainly not! Let each of us be determined to continue to resist immorality, to respect divinely constituted authority, and to keep ourselves in God's love. In that way, we will enjoy a glorious victory together.

16. What does it mean to pray with holy spirit, and what is one thing we should ask Jehovah for regularly?

17. (a) Why is Jude's example in the matter of mercy so remarkable? (b) How might each of us continue to show mercy?

18. How can we be certain of victory in our spiritual warfare?

Questions for Review

- ☐ How does Jude's letter teach us to resist immorality?
- ☐ Why is it so important to respect divinely constituted authority?
- ☐ What is so serious about misusing congregational authority?
- ☐ How may we work to remain in God's love?

Shouldering Responsibility for Family Care

"FATHERS, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) With those inspired words, the apostle Paul clearly placed the responsibility for family care where it belongs—on the father's shoulders.

In most families the father is not alone in caring for his children. His wife, the mother of his children, gladly shares the load with her husband. Thus, King Solomon declared: "Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother."—Proverbs 1:8.

Harper's

Material and Spiritual Care

Parents who love their children do not intentionally neglect them. Indeed, for Christians to do so would be tantamount to renouncing their faith, as we conclude from Paul's words to Timothy: "Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith." (1 Timothy 5:8) Christians realize that raising children in "the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah" requires much more than providing for them in a material way.

Consider Moses' exhortation to the nation of Israel when they were camped on the plains of Moab, just before they entered the Promised Land. There he reiterated God's laws to them and instructed them: "You must apply these words of mine to your heart and your soul." (Deuteronomy 11:18) Earlier he had reminded them that they should love Jehovah with all their heart, soul, and vital force, adding: "These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:5, 6) It was vital for Israelite parents to allow the words of God's Law to penetrate their hearts. With hearts brimful of spiritual appreciation, Israelite parents could effectively obey Moses' next words: "You must inculcate them [the words of God's Law] in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up."—Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19; compare Matthew 12:34, 35.

Notice that fathers were to "inculcate" those words in their children and "speak of them." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines "inculcate" as "to teach and impress by frequent repetitions or admonitions." When parents spoke about God's Law daily—morning, noon, and night—this conveyed much to their children. As the youngsters sensed the love that their parents had for God's Law, they in turn were influenced to develop a closeness to Jehovah. (Deuteronomy 6:24, 25) Interestingly, Moses specifically instructed fathers to teach their children 'when they sat in their house.' Such teaching was a part of family care. But what of today?

"When You Sit in Your House"

"It's not easy," explains Janet, a Christian mother of four.* "You need persistence," agrees Paul, her husband. Like many other Witness parents, Paul and Janet endeavor to study the Bible with their children at least once a week. "We try to have our family Bible discussion every Monday evening at a set time," Paul explains, admitting: "But it doesn't always work." As an appointed elder in his congregation, he has sometimes been called away to deal with urgent matters. His two eldest children serve as full-time ministers. They find that evenings are productive times for contacting people in the ministry. Thus, as a family, they have adjusted the time for their family study. "We sometimes have our study immediately after our evening meal," Paul explains.

Even though parents wisely demonstrate flexibility in the timing of their family study, they try to maintain its regularity. "If the time of our study has to be changed," notes daughter Clare, "Dad always puts the new time on the fridge door, so that we all know when it will be."

Gathering for a regular family Bible study also provides a fine opportunity for the younger members of the family to share their concerns and problems with their parents. Such a study works well when it is not so rigid that youngsters simply read answers to the questions asked in the Bible textbook they use. "Our family study is a forum for discussion," explains Martin who has two sons. "When you get together once a week to discuss a Scriptural subject, you find out how your family is doing spiritually," he comments. "All sorts of things come out in the discussion. You learn what is happening at school, and more interestingly, you find out what attitudes your children are developing." His wife, Sandra, agrees and feels that she too derives much from the family study. "While my husband is conducting the study," she relates, "I learn a lot by listening to the way my sons answer his questions." Then Sandra tailors her comments to help her boys. She enjoys the study more because she is actively involved. Yes, family study periods offer parents insight into their children's thinking.—Proverbs 16:23; 20:5.

Be Adaptable and Persevere

When the time comes for your family study, you may find that one child may be alert and interested, whereas another needs coaxing to concentrate and benefit. One Christian mother comments: "That's family life! You know what you should do as a parent. So when you get on with it, Jehovah helps and brings results."

A youngster's attention span may vary greatly according to his age. The discerning parent takes this into account. One couple has five children, ranging in age from 6 to the 20's. The father, Michael, says: "Give the youngest the opportunity to answer the questions first. Then let the older children add the details and bring in points

* Some names have been changed.

they have prepared." This way of dealing discerningly with their children enables parents to teach the value of considering others. "One of our sons may understand," notes Martin, "but the other boy needs much help to get the point. I find that the study session becomes a training ground for demonstrating Christian patience and other fruits of the spirit."—Galatians 5:22, 23; Philippians 2:4.

Be prepared to adapt to your children's varying abilities and levels of growth. Simon and Mark, now teenagers, found that when they were younger, they really enjoyed studying the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived* with their parents. "Our father had us act out different parts just like a play," they recall. Their father remembers getting down on his hands and knees to act out the parable of the neighborly Samaritan with his sons. (Luke 10:30-35) "It was realistic and much fun."

Many children buck against the routine of a family study. Should this stop parents from conducting the study when planned? No, certainly not. "Foolishness is tied up with the heart of a boy [or, girl]," acknowledges Proverbs 22:15. One single mother thought that she was failing as conductor of the family study when, on many occasions, distractions seemed to disrupt the session. But she persevered. Now her children have great respect for her and have come to value the love and concern that she showed by persisting in conducting a regular family study.

Helping "Fatherless" Boys and Girls

Christian elders are to "shepherd the flock of God." (1 Peter 5:2, 3) Periodic visits to the families in their congregations offer them opportunities to commend parents who shoulder their Christian responsibilities. On whose shoulders does the responsibility for teaching the children of single parents lie? Never forget that the responsibility for instructing the children rests with the parent.

Christian prudence will help elders avoid compromising situations that could arise if they were to assume the role of a missing parent. Though two brothers may be able to visit a Christian sister who is a single parent, they will at all times be circumspect in what they arrange in the way of support for the family study arrangement. Occasionally, an invitation to the children (and, indeed, the single parent) to join the elder's own family study may prove upbuilding and practical. However, never forget that Jehovah is our great heavenly Father. He is surely present to guide and help the mother when she conducts a study with her children, even though she does so alone.

What about the situation where a young person is spiritually-minded, but his parents manifest little or no concern for their spiritual responsibilities? Jehovah's faithful servants need never become downhearted. "To you [Jehovah God] the unfortunate one, the fatherless boy, commits himself," sang the psalmist. "You yourself have become his helper." (Psalm 10:14) In turn, loving elders in the congregation will do their best to encourage the parents as they care for their children. They may suggest a family discussion and then attend to offer some practical suggestions on how to study together. They will not, of course, take away the responsibility of the parents, on whose shoulders it Scripturally rests.

Children whose parents do not embrace the faith need much support. Including them in your family study may prove beneficial if that is acceptable to their parents. Robert, now a grown-up with a family of his own, attended Christian meetings with his parents when he was only three years old. He had fond memories of those meetings even after his parents stopped associating with the Christian congregation. When he

A family study provides a fine opportunity for the younger members to share their concerns with their parents

was ten, he met a Witness boy who took him along to the meetings. The Witness boy's parents gladly took Robert under their wing as a spiritual orphan and later studied with him. Thanks to this loving care, he made rapid progress and now enjoys serving as an elder in the congregation.

Even when parents oppose the progress of their children, the children are not alone. Jehovah remains a faithful heavenly Father. "A father of fatherless boys . . . is God in his holy dwelling," declares Psalm 68:5. Spiritually fatherless boys and *girls* know that they can turn to him in prayer, and he will sustain them. (Psalm 55:22; 146:9) Jehovah's motherlike organization diligently fulfills its responsibility to prepare delightful spiritual meals served through its publications and at the meetings of the more than 85,000 Christian congregations worldwide. Thus, with spiritual help from our Father, Jehovah, and his motherlike organization, even the "fatherless" will enjoy some measure of Bible study.

Christian parents who conduct regular family Bible studies with their children deserve commendation. Single parents who persevere in training their youngsters in Jehovah's ways merit special attention and praise for their efforts. (Proverbs 22:6) All who show concern for spiritually fatherless children know that this pleases our heavenly Father, Jehovah. Caring for a family's spiritual needs is a heavy responsibility. But 'do not give up, for in due season you will reap if you do not tire out.'—Galatians 6:9.

A HAPPY OCCASION

The Graduation of the 104th Class of Gilead

"THIS is a happy day, and we are all rejoicing." With those words Carey Barber, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, opened the graduation festivities of the 104th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead on March 14, 1998. The audience of 4,945 was invited to begin the occasion by singing Kingdom song number 208, entitled "A Song of Rejoicing."

Practical Counsel to Remain Happy

The opening portion of the program, a series of five short Bible-based discourses, provided some practical counsel on how to maintain the joyful spirit that permeated graduation day.

The first talk was delivered by Joseph Eames of the Writing Department. He spoke on the theme "Imitate the Spirit of Loyal Ones," based on the Bible account at 2 Samuel chapters 15 and 17, where Absalom, David's son, conspired to take away his father's God-given kingdom by inciting a revolt. However, there were those who remained loyal to Jehovah's anointed, King David. What lesson could the new missionaries take away from this? "Wherever you go in your missionary assignment, loyally promote the spirit of cooperation and respect for theocratic authority. Help others to do the same," concluded Brother Eames.

Next on the program was David Sinclair, who outlined ten requirements, mentioned in Psalm 15, for being guests in 'Jehovah's tent.' His talk, entitled "Continue as Guests in Your Missionary Tent," encouraged the graduating students to apply this psalm to their missionary assignments, where they would be guests. Brother Sinclair highlighted the importance of living by godly standards at all times. The result? Psalm 15:5 states: "He that is doing these things will never be made to totter."

John Barr, a member of the Governing Body, followed and called attention to the invigorating effect that singing at Christian meetings has. But what is the most joyful song being sung around the earth today? It is the good news of God's Messianic Kingdom. What is resulting from all this singing, or preaching about the Kingdom? The second stanza of song number 208 succinctly puts it: "Thru Kingdom preaching and Christian teaching, many are drawn to Jehovah's side. These, too, are voicing songs of rejoicing, sounding them out, O so far and wide!" Yes, each day about 1,000 new disciples are being baptized. Brother Barr concluded: "Isn't it wonderful to think, brothers, that you are being sent to territories to meet the kind of people who will just be waiting to hear your song of praise?"

"Listen to the Voices of Experience" was the title of the discourse that James Mantz of the Writing Department next delivered. He pointed out that some things can only be learned by personal experience. (Hebrews

Class Statistics

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

104th 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) Romero, M.; Howarth, J.; Blackburne-Kane, D.; Hohengasser, E.; West, S.; Thom, S.
(2) Colon, W.; Glancy, J.; Kono, Y.; Drews, P.; Tam, S.; Kono, T.
(3) Tam, D.; Zechmeister, S.; Gerdel, S.; Elwell, J.; Dunec, P.; Tibaudo, H.
(4) Taylor, E.; Hildred, L.; Sanches, M.; Anderson, C.; Bucknor, T.; Hohengasser, E.
(5) Howarth, D.; Ward, C.; Hinch, P.; McDonald, Y.; Sanches, T.; Thom, O.
(6) Drews, T.; Tibaudo, E.; Elwell, D.; Dunec, W.; Blackburne-Kane, D.; Ward, W.
(7) Anderson, M.; Zechmeister, R.; McDonald, R.; Bucknor, R.; Glancy, S.; Gerdel, G.
(8) Romero, D.; Hinch, R.; Hildred, S.; Taylor, J.; Colon, A.; West, W.

5:8) Nevertheless, Proverbs 22:17 encourages us to 'incline our ear and hear the words of the wise ones,' or those who have gained experience. The graduating students can learn much from those who have gone before them. "They know how to bargain with the local shopkeepers. They know which areas of the city to avoid because of physical or moral dangers. They know the sensitivities of the local people. The longtime missionaries know what you need to be happy and successful in your assignment," said Brother Mantz.

Brothers who shared in instructing the 104th class: (from left) W. Liverance, U. Glass, K. Adams, M. Noumair

Speaking on the theme "Appreciate Your Theocratic Assignment," Wallace Liverance, Gilead School registrar, explained that while some missionaries, such as the apostle Paul, Timothy, and Barnabas, received their assignments from God through the holy spirit or some miraculous manifestation, Gilead-trained missionaries are assigned a place in the worldwide field by "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) He compared the missionaries' assignments to the places Gideon assigned his men who were to battle the Midianites. (Judges 7:16-21) "Appreciate your theocratic missionary assignment. Just as Gideon's soldiers 'kept standing each one in his place,' view your assignment as your place to be. Have faith that Jehovah can use you just as he used Gideon's three hundred," urged Brother Liverance.

Being People-Oriented Results in Happiness

The Watchtower once commented: "Rather than build our interests and lives around manufactured items and gadgets of this present order, things that have no certainty of continuance, how much better and wiser to make *people* our real interest and learn to find genuine joy in doing things for others." In harmony with that, Brother Mark Noumair, one of the Gilead School instructors, discussed with a group of students their field service experiences and commented: "Show-

ing personal interest in others is what is going to make you good missionaries."

Keys to Happiness in the Foreign Field

What are some keys to success and happiness in the missionary work? Brothers Charles Woody of the Service Department and Harold Jackson, a former missionary in Latin America and an assistant to the Teaching Committee, interviewed members of different Branch Committees who were attending the ninth class of the school for branch personnel. Here is a sample of the advice these had to offer:

Albert Musonda from Zambia observed: "When the missionary takes the initiative to go and greet the brothers, it engenders a very good spirit because the brothers will draw close to the missionary, and the missionary will draw close to them."

Rolando Morales of Guatemala suggested that when new missionaries are offered something to drink by friendly people, they can kindly and tactfully reply: "I'm new in the country. I wish I could take it, but my body does not have the natural defenses that your body has. I hope some day I can accept it, and I'll be glad to do so." What are the benefits of that kind of reply? "People will not get offended, and the missionaries will have been kind to others."

What can help missionaries endure in their assignments? Brother Paul Crudass, a graduate of the 79th class of Gilead, who has been serving in Liberia for the past 12 years, made this observation: "I know it's true that parents miss their children. But there are times when the missionary is trying to get used to the country, the environment, the culture, the people. He may feel like leaving. If he gets a letter from home saying, 'We miss you so much; we don't know what we'll do without you,' that might be all he needs to pack his bags and go home. It's very important for the relatives who are here today to remember that."

After the interviews, the final talk on the program was presented by Theodore Jaracz, a member of the Governing Body. His theme: "Keep the Kingdom Foremost in Your Life." How can the missionaries stay focused and not get distracted from their work? He encouraged them to have a schedule for personal Bible study, which will help them to keep Kingdom interests foremost in life. And there was this timely reminder: "Some missionaries have neglected personal study because they became wrapped up with electronic gadgets, E-mail, and the computer. We should have the good sense to be balanced in the use of any tool and not spend an inordinate amount of time on something that could encroach on our personal study of God's Word."

Following Brother Jaracz's discourse came the presentation of the diplomas and the reading of a letter of appreciation from the class. The class representative expressed the feelings of everyone this way: "We saw tangible evidence of the love that Jesus said would characterize his disciples, and this has reassured us that no matter where we are, there is a warm, loving, motherlike organization supporting us. With such backing, we are ready to go to the ends of the earth." It was a moving conclusion to a happy graduation day for the 104th class of Gilead.

In Our Next Issue

Earth—Why Is It Here?

A Very Special Wedding

True Justice—When and How?

SUSTAINED THROUGH TERRIBLE TRIALS

AS TOLD BY ÉVA JOSEFSSON

A small group of us had gathered in the Újpest district of Budapest, Hungary, for a brief meeting before going out in the Christian ministry. It was 1939, shortly before the beginning of World War II, and the preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses was under ban in Hungary. Those who shared in teaching the Bible publicly in those days were often arrested.

SINCE it was my first time to share in this activity, I must have looked a bit anxious and pale. An older Christian brother turned to me and said: "Éva, you never need to fear. Serving Jehovah is the greatest honor a human can have." Those considerate and strengthening words helped to sustain me through many terrible trials.

A Jewish Background

I was the oldest child in a Jewish family of five children. Mother was not satisfied with Judaism, and she started to examine other religions. This was how she met Erzsébet Slézinger, another Jewish woman who too was searching for Bible truth. Erzsébet brought Mother into contact with Jehovah's Witnesses, and as a result, I also became deeply interested in Bible teachings. Soon I started sharing with others what I had learned.

When I turned 18 in the summer of 1941, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah God by means of baptism in the Danube River. Mother was baptized at the same time, but Father did not share our newfound Christian faith. Soon after my baptism, I made plans to pioneer, that is, to share in the full-time ministry. I needed to obtain a bicycle, so I began to work in the laboratory of a large textile factory.

Beginning of Trials

The Nazis had taken over Hungary, and the factory where I worked had come under German management. One day all workers were called to appear before the supervisors to swear an oath of allegiance to the Nazis.

We were told that failure to do this would have serious consequences. During the ceremony where we were required to heil Hitler, I stood respectfully but did not carry out the act required. I was called into the office that very day, given my salary, and dismissed. Since work was scarce, I wondered what would happen to my plans to pioneer. The next day, however, I got a new job with even better pay.

Now my desire to pioneer could be realized. I had several pioneer partners, and my last one was Juliska Asztalos. We used only our Bible in the ministry, having no literature to offer. When we found interested people, we made return visits and lent them literature.

Time and again, Juliska and I had to change the territory we were working. This was because a priest, upon learning we were calling on 'his sheep,' would announce in church that if Jehovah's Witnesses visited them, they must report it to him or to the police. When friendly people told us of such an announcement, we would move to another territory.

One day Juliska and I called on a young boy who showed interest. We made an appointment for a return visit to lend him something to read. But when we returned, the police were there, and we were arrested and taken to the police station in Dunavecse. The boy had been used as a lure to catch us. When we arrived at the police station, we saw a priest there and knew that he too was involved.

My Worst Trial

There at the police station, all my hair was shaved off, and I had to stand naked in front of about a dozen policemen. They interrogated me, wanting to know who our leader in Hungary was. I explained that we had no leader other than Jesus Christ. They then beat me ruthlessly with their batons, but I did not betray my Christian brothers.

Afterward, they tied my feet together and held my hands over my head and also tied them together. Then, one after the other, they raped me, all except one policeman. I was tied so firmly that I still had marks on my wrists three years later. I was so brutalized that I was kept in the basement for two weeks until my most severe injuries were somewhat healed.

A Period of Relief

Later I was taken to a prison in Nagykanizsa, where there were many of Jehovah's Witnesses. Two relatively happy years followed despite our imprisonment. We held all our meetings in secret, and we functioned more or less like a congregation. We also had many opportunities for informal witnessing. It was in this prison that I met Olga Slézinger, a fleshly sister of Erzsébet Slézinger, the woman who had introduced Bible truth to my mother and me.

By 1944 the Nazis in Hungary had determined to liquidate the Hungarian Jews, even as they had systematically been killing them in other occupied areas. One day they came for Olga and me. We were packed into railway cattle cars, and after a very difficult journey through Czechoslovakia, we reached our destination in southern Poland —the death camp Auschwitz.

Surviving in Auschwitz

I felt safe when I was with Olga. She could be humorous even in trying situations. When we arrived in Auschwitz, we appeared before the infamous Dr. Mengele, whose task it was to separate the new arrivals who were not fit for work from the able-bodied. The former were sent to gas chambers. When it was our turn, Mengele asked Olga, "How old are you?"

Boldly, and with a humorous twinkle in her eyes, she answered, "20." In reality she was twice that age. But Mengele laughed and let her go to the right side and thus stay alive.

All prisoners in Auschwitz were marked with symbols on their prison garb—Jews had the Star of David, and Jehovah's Witnesses had the purple triangle. When they wanted to sew the Star of David on our clothes, we explained that we were Jehovah's Witnesses and wanted the purple triangle. This was not because we were ashamed of our Jewish heritage, but we were now Jehovah's Witnesses. They tried to force us to accept the Jewish emblem by kicking and beating us. But we stood firm until they admitted us as Jehovah's Witnesses.

In time, I met up with my sister Elvira, who was three years younger than me. Our whole family of seven had been taken to Auschwitz. Only Elvira and I had been approved as fit for work. Father, Mother, and our three siblings died in the gas chambers. Elvira was not a Witness then, and we did not stay in the same part of the camp. She survived, immigrated to the United States, became a Witness in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and later died there in 1973.

Surviving in Other Camps

In the winter of 1944/45, the Germans decided to evacuate Auschwitz, since the Russians were approaching. So we were moved to Bergen-Belsen in the northern part of Germany. Soon after our arrival, Olga and I were sent to Braunschweig. Here we were supposed to help clear debris after the intense bombings by the Allied forces. Olga and I discussed the matter. Since we were not certain if doing this work would violate our neutrality, we both decided not to share in it.

Our decision caused quite a stir. We were beaten with leather whips and then taken before a firing squad. We were given one minute to think the matter over, and we were told that if we did not change our minds, we would be shot. We said we did not need any time to think about it because we had made up our minds. However, since the camp commander was not present and he was the only one with authority to give an execution order, our execution had to be delayed.

In the meantime we were forced to stand in the camp yard all day long. Two armed soldiers, who were replaced every two hours, guarded us. We were not given any food, and we suffered terribly from the cold, since it was February. A week of this treatment passed, but the commander did not show up. So we were put on the back of a truck, and to our surprise, we found ourselves back in Bergen-Belsen.

By then Olga and I were in terrible condition. I had lost most of my hair and had a high fever. It was only with the greatest effort that I could work some. The thin cabbage soup and small piece of bread each day were not enough. But it was necessary that we work because those who could not were executed. German sisters who worked with me in the kitchen helped me to get some rest. When guards making an inspection were on the way, the sisters warned me, so that I could stand at the workbench, appearing to be hard at work.

One day Olga just did not have the strength to go to her place of work, and after that we saw her no more. I lost a brave friend and companion, one who had been of great help to me during those difficult months in the camps. As an anointed follower of our Lord Jesus Christ, she must immediately have received her heavenly reward.—Revelation 14:13.

Release and Life Afterward

When the war ended in May 1945 and liberation came, I was so weak that I could not

In the ministry in Sweden following World War II

With my husband

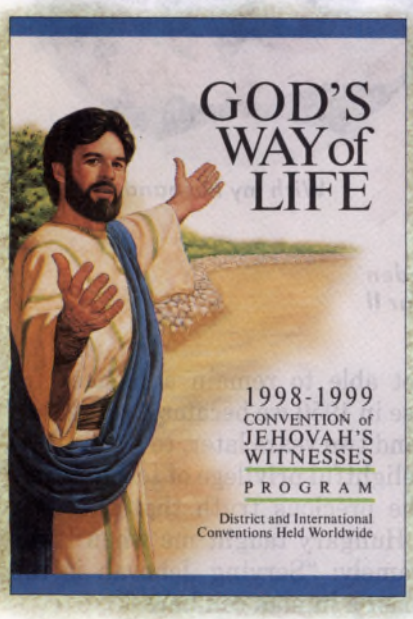
rejoice that the yoke of the oppressors had at last been crushed; nor could I join the convoys taking the liberated ones to countries willing to receive them. I remained for three months in a hospital in order to regain strength. Afterward I was taken to Sweden, which became my new home. At once, I got in touch with my Christian brothers and sisters and in time took up the precious treasure of the field ministry.

In 1949, I married Lennart Josefsson, who had for years served as a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses. He too had been imprisoned during World War II as a result of maintaining his faith. We began our life together as pioneers on September 1, 1949, and were assigned to serve in the town of Borås. During our first years there, we regularly conducted ten Bible studies each week with interested ones. We had the joy of seeing the congregation in Borås become three within nine years, and now there are five.

I was not able to remain a pioneer for long because in 1950 we became parents to a daughter, and two years later, to a son. Thus I had the delightful privilege of teaching our children the precious truth that the dear brother in Hungary taught me when I was only 16, namely: "Serving Jehovah is the greatest honor a human can have."

Looking back on my life, I realize that I have experienced the truth of what the disciple James wrote when reminding us of Job's endurance: "Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful." (James 5:11) Although I too suffered terrible trials, I have been richly blessed with two children, their mates, and six grandchildren—all of whom are worshipers of Jehovah. Besides that, I have many, many spiritual children and grandchildren, some of whom are serving as pioneers and missionaries. Now my great hope is to meet dear ones who are sleeping in death and to embrace them when they rise from their memorial tombs.—John 5:28, 29.

"GOD'S WAY of LIFE" 1998-1999 Convention Is at Hand!



IN THE United States alone, 198 conventions are scheduled from May to September. Likely, one of these three-day gatherings will be at a city not far from your home. In most places, the program will begin each day—Friday through Sunday—with music at 9:30 a.m.

Friday morning's program will highlight reports on the progress of Kingdom preaching in various parts of the world. And the theme for the convention will be set by the keynote address, "Christ's Ransom—God's Way of Salvation."

In the afternoon the symposium, "Parents—Inculcate God's Way in Your Children," will provide suggestions on how to motivate young ones to love and serve Jehovah. The afternoon program will conclude with the talk "Is There Life After Death?"

Saturday morning's program features the disciple-making work of Jehovah's Witnesses in three successive parts, "Helping People Get on the Way to Life," "The Challenge of Reaching People," and "Teaching Disciples All That Christ Commanded." At the conclusion of the morning program, there will be provision for new disciples to be baptized.

The opening talk Saturday afternoon, "Serving With Endless Life in View," encourages us to give prayerful thought to our personal reasons for serving God. The talks "Appreciating 'Gifts in Men,' Who Teach God's Way" and "Personality —Strip Off the Old and Put On the New" present an enlightening verse-by-verse examination of Ephesians chapter 4. Next, fine Scriptural admonition will be provided in the talk "Keep Yourself Unspotted From the World" and in the three-part symposium "Youths—Follow God's Way." The afternoon program concludes with the talk "The Creator—His Personality and His Ways."

Sunday's morning program features a three-part symposium that will discuss the concluding chapters of the Bible book of Ezekiel as well as their prophetic application. Rounding out the morning program is the full-costumed drama based on the faithfulness of the three Hebrew youths. The convention highlight in the afternoon is the public address, "The Only Way to Everlasting Life."