

THE WATCHTOWER

JUNE 1, 1999

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



TIME AND ETERNITY WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

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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TIME AND ETERNITY

What Do We Really Know About Them?

“TIME seems to be one of the most mysterious forms of human experience,” states one encyclopedia. Yes, to define time in simple terms is nearly impossible. We may say that time “elapses,” “goes,” “flies,” and even that we ourselves are moving in “the stream of time.” But we really do not know what we are talking about.

Time has been defined as the “distance between two events.” Yet, our experience seems to tell us that time is independent of events; it appears to go on whether something happens or not. One philosopher claims that time actually does not exist but is simply something imagined. Can that on which so much of our experience is built be merely a figment of our imagination?

The Bible's View of Time

The Bible does not give any definition of time, suggesting that it is perhaps beyond man's ability to understand fully. It is like the endless expanse of space, which we also find difficult to comprehend. Time, apparently, is one of those things that only God can fully understand, for he alone is “from time indefinite to time indefinite.”—Psalm 90:2.

Even though the Bible does not define time, it does speak of time as a reality. To start with, the Bible tells us that God created the “luminaries”—the sun, moon, and stars—as time markers, to “serve as signs and for seasons and for days and years.” Many events recorded in the Bible are firmly placed in the stream of time. (Genesis 1:14; 5:3-32; 7:11, 12; 11:10-32; Exodus 12:40, 41) The Bible also speaks of time as something that we should use wisely in order to be in line for God's blessing of an eternity of time—the prospect of living forever.—Ephesians 5:15, 16.

Everlasting Life—Is It Logical?

Frustrating as it is to try to understand what time really is, to many people the idea of everlasting life, or living forever, is most puzzling. One reason for this may be that our experience of time has always been connected with the cycle of birth, growth, aging, and death. Thus, we have come to identify the flow of time with



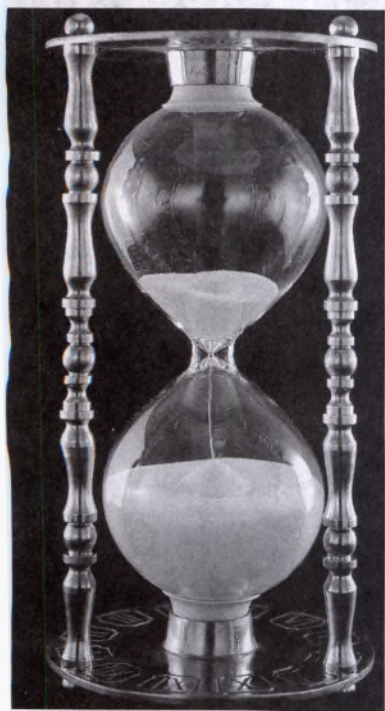
the aging process itself. For many, to think in any other way would seem to be a violation of the very concept of time. 'Why should humans be an exception to that to which all other living creatures seem to be subjected?' they may ask.

What is often overlooked in this way of reasoning is the fact that humans are already an exception to the rest of creation in a number of areas. For example, animals lack the intellectual abilities that humans have. Despite claims otherwise, they do not become creative beyond what their instinct drives them to do. They have neither the artistic gifts nor the capacity to show love and appreciation that humans possess. If humans have been given so much more in these qualities and abilities that make life meaningful, why is it not possible that they

have also been given more when it comes to life itself?

On the other hand, is it not strange that trees, which cannot think, live for thousands of years in some cases, whereas intelligent humans can live only 70 to 80 years on the average? Is it not a paradox that tortoises, which have no creative or artistic abilities, can live more than 200 years, while humans, richly endowed with these abilities, live much less than half as long?

Although time and eternity cannot be fully comprehended by man, the promise of everlasting life is still a hope well founded in the Bible. In it, the term "everlasting life" occurs nearly 40 times. But if God's purpose is that humans should live forever, why has it not already been realized? This question will be considered in the next article.



GOD IS NOT SLOW Regarding His Promise

“**H**OW long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help, and you do not hear?” Those are the words of the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk, who lived in the seventh century B.C.E. But they do have a familiar ring, do they not? It is human nature to want to have the things that we dearly long for right away or as soon as possible. And this is especially true in our age of instant gratification.—Habakkuk 1:2.

In the first century, there were some who apparently felt that God should have fulfilled his promises sooner. They had become so impatient that they even considered God to be *slow* or *late*. On this account, the apostle Peter had to remind them that God's view of time is quite different from ours. Peter writes: “Let this one fact not be escaping your notice, beloved ones, that one day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.”—2 Peter 3:8.

According to this way of figuring time, an 80-year-old person has lived only about two hours, and all of mankind's history has lasted only about six days. When we look at things from this perspective, it becomes easier for us to understand God's way of dealing with us.

God, however, is not indifferent to time. On the contrary, he is very time conscious. (Acts 1:7) Peter, therefore, goes on to say: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Unlike humans, God does not feel pressured to do things as if time were running out for him. As the "King of eternity," he has a marvelous overview and can determine when in the stream of time his actions will do the most good for all involved.—1 Timothy 1:17.

After explaining the reason for God's apparent slowness, Peter sounds this warning: "Jehovah's day will come as a thief." That is to say, the day of accounting will come just when people are not expecting it. Then, in the following verses, Peter points to the marvelous prospect for those manifesting "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion," namely, that they may survive into God's promised "new heavens and a new earth."—2 Peter 3:10-13.

This should make us appreciate all the more that God's judgment has not yet come. His patience has made it possible for us to come to know his purpose and to adjust our lives in order to receive his promised blessings. Should we not view "the patience of our Lord as salvation," as Peter argues? (2 Peter 3:15) There is, however, another factor in God's patience.

A Measure of Error to Be Filled

Studying God's past dealings with mankind, we note that he often withheld his judgment until all hope of improvement

was gone. In connection with God's judgment upon the Canaanites, for instance, he pointed out their sins to Abraham long in advance. But the time for the execution of his judgment was not then due. Why not? The Bible says: "Because the error of the Amorites [Canaanites] has not yet come to completion," or as the *Knox* version puts it: "The wickedness of the Amorrites [had] not reached its full term."—Genesis 15:16.*

About 400 years later, however, God's judgment came, and Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, took over the land. A few of the Canaanites, like Rahab and the Gibeonites, were saved because of their attitude and actions, but for the most part, they had reached an extreme level of uncleanness, as is revealed by modern archaeological excavations. They practiced phallic worship, temple prostitution, and child sacrifice. *Halley's Bible Handbook* states: "Archaeologists who dig in the ruins of Canaanite cities wonder that God did not destroy them sooner than he did." In the end, the Canaanites' 'measure of sin was full'; their wickedness had "reached its full term." No one could rightfully accuse God of being unjust when he let the land be cleansed while sparing those who had shown a right attitude.

We find a similar picture in Noah's day. Despite the fact that people before the Flood were wicked, God mercifully decided that their time would continue another 120 years. During part of that time, Noah served as "a preacher of righteousness." (2 Peter 2:5) As time passed, their wickedness apparently ripened. "God saw the earth and, look! it was ruined, because all flesh had ruined its way on the earth." (Genesis 6:3, 12) Their 'measure of sin was full'; the passing of time had brought their wrong

* A footnote on this verse in *The Soncino Chumash* states: "To deserve expulsion, since God does not punish a nation until its measure of sin is full."



inclinations to full bloom. When God acted he was fully justified. Only eight persons proved righteous in God's eyes, and he saved them.

The same pattern is seen in God's treatment of Israel. Despite their having behaved in an unfaithful and depraved way, God had patience with them for hundreds of years. The record says: "Jehovah . . . kept sending . . . his messengers, sending again and again, because he felt compassion for his people . . . But they were continually . . . despising his words and mocking at his prophets, until the rage of Jehovah came up against his people, until there was no healing." (2 Chronicles 36:15, 16) The people had reached a point where improvement was no longer possible. Only Jeremiah and a few others could be saved. God could not be called unjust when he finally brought judgment upon the rest.

God's Time to Act Is Here

From these examples we can see that God is withholding judgment on the present system of things only until the time is ripe. This is expressed in the order given to God's symbolic executioner: "Put your sharp sickle in and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, because its grapes have become ripe." And the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and he hurled it into the great winepress of the anger of God." Notice that mankind's wickedness had "become ripe," that is, it had reached a point beyond the possibility of improvement. When God executes judgment, there will be no doubt that his intervention is justified.—Revelation 14:18, 19.

Considering the above, it is clear that God's judgment against the world must be near because the world has taken on the characteristics that warranted God's judgment in the past. Everywhere we look, the earth is filled with violence, just as it was

before the Flood of Noah's day. People's attitudes are becoming more and more like what is described at Genesis 6:5: "Every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only bad all the time." Even the gross sins that brought God's judgment against the Canaanites are commonplace today.

Especially since World War I, mankind has experienced appalling changes. It has seen the earth drenched with the blood of millions. Warfare, genocide, terrorism, crime, and lawlessness have erupted worldwide. Famine, disease, and immorality have stalked our globe. All the evidence indicates that we now live among that wicked generation of which Jesus said: "This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matthew 24:34) The world is now filling its "measure of sin." "The clusters of the vine of the earth" are becoming ripe for the harvest.

Time for You to Act

The apostle John was told that as the time of judgment nears, two types of ripening will take place. On the one hand, "he that is doing unrighteousness, let him do unrighteousness still; and let the filthy one be made filthy still." But on the other hand, "let the righteous one do righteousness still, and let the holy one be made holy still." (Revelation 22:10, 11) This latter development is taking place in connection with the worldwide Bible educational work conducted by Jehovah's Witnesses. The objective of that work is to teach people what God requires of them so that they can be counted as worthy of receiving everlasting life. This activity now reaches out to 233 lands through some 87,000 congregations.

God is not slow. Patiently he has allowed individuals the time needed to "put on the new personality" in order to come in line for his promises. (Ephesians 4:24) Today, God is still waiting, despite the constantly worsening conditions in the world. Jeho-



Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide are helping people to come in line for God's eternal blessings

vah's Witnesses around the world are doing all they reasonably can to share with their neighbors the knowledge that leads to eternal life. (John 17:3, 17) Happily, each year over 300,000 people are responding and being baptized.

With everlasting life in view, now is the time, not to wait, but to act. For in a short while, we will see the fulfillment of Jesus' promise: "Everyone that is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all." —John 11:26.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

"With God All Things Are Possible"

THE above words, found at Matthew 19:26, proved to be true for a young woman in Venezuela. After she learned to put full trust in Jehovah, she was able to overcome a serious problem. She relates:

"My grandmother was very kind and loving. Sadly, she died when I was just 16 years old. Her death was a terrible blow to me. I became unbalanced, not even wanting to go out of the house to the yard. I ended up being almost a total recluse.

"I did not go to school, nor did I have a job. I just stayed in my room. Lonely and without any friends, I suffered from severe depression. I felt totally worthless and wanted to die and end it all. I kept asking myself, 'Why do I exist?'

"My mother used to receive the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines from a young Witness named Gisela. One day my mother spotted Gisela as she was passing by our home and asked her if she could help me. Gisela agreed to try, but I refused to see her. This did not dissuade Gisela. She wrote me a letter and told me that she wanted to be my friend and that someone far more important than her wanted to be my friend too. That person, she said, was Jehovah God.

"This touched me, and I answered her letter. For three months we corresponded. Only after much prodding and urging by Gisela did I finally find the courage to meet her. At our first meeting, Gisela studied the Bible with me, using the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. After the study, she invited me to attend a meeting at the local Kingdom Hall. I was taken aback. I had not been out of the house for four years, and the thought of being on the street was terrifying.

"Gisela was very patient with me. She assured me that there was nothing to be afraid of and that she would accompany me to the meeting. I finally consented. When we arrived at the Kingdom Hall, I began to tremble and perspire. I could not greet anyone. Nonetheless, I agreed to continue attending the meetings, and Gisela faithfully called for me each week.

"To help me overcome my nervousness, Gisela took me to the meetings very early. We stood by the door and greeted everyone as they arrived. That way I faced only one or two people at a time, instead of a whole group all at once. When

I felt I could not stand it, Gisela quoted to me Matthew 19:26: 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'

"Although it was not easy, eventually I was able to attend an even larger gathering of people at a circuit assembly. What a huge step that was for me!

In September 1995, I plucked up the courage to speak to the elders about engaging in the door-to-door ministry. Six months later, in April 1996, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah through water baptism.

"When someone recently asked me how I found the courage to do this, I replied: 'My desire to please Jehovah is greater than my fear.' While I still have occasional bouts of depression, my joy is enhanced by my serving as a regular pioneer. Looking back, I have to agree with Gisela. I now have a Friend who is interested in me and who 'imparts power to me.' " —Philippians 4:13.



"My desire to please Jehovah is greater than my fear"

"GIFTS IN MEN" TO CARE FOR JEHOVAH'S SHEEP

*"When he ascended on high he carried away captives;
he gave gifts in men."*—EPHESIANS 4:8.

"THANK you for caring so much about us. Your smiles, your warmth, and your concern are so genuine. You are always there to lend a hearing ear and share words from the Bible that lift our spirits. I pray that I never take you for granted." So wrote a Christian sister to the elders in her congregation. Clearly, the love shown by caring Christian shepherds had touched her heart.—1 Peter 5:2, 3.

² Elders are a provision from Jehovah to look after his sheep. (Luke 12:32; John 10:16) Jehovah's sheep are dear to him—so dear, in fact, that he purchased them with the precious blood of Jesus. Little wonder, then, that Jehovah is pleased when elders treat his flock with tenderness. (Acts 20:28, 29) Notice the prophetic description of these elders, or "princes": "Each one must prove to be like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm, like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land." (Isaiah 32:1, 2) Yes, they are to protect, refresh, and comfort his sheep. Elders who compassionately shepherd the flock are thus endeavoring to live up to what God expects of them.

1. What expression did a Christian sister make about the elders in her congregation?

2, 3. (a) According to Isaiah 32:1, 2, how do compassionate elders care for Jehovah's sheep?
(b) When can an elder be considered a gift?

³ Such elders are referred to in the Bible as "gifts in men." (Ephesians 4:8) When you think of a gift, you think of something given to fill a need or to bring happiness to the one receiving it. An elder can be considered a gift when he uses his abilities to provide needed assistance and to contribute to the happiness of the flock. How can he do this? The answer, found in Paul's words at Ephesians 4:7-16, magnifies Jehovah's loving concern for his sheep.

"Gifts in Men"—From Where?

⁴ When Paul used the expression "gifts in men," he was quoting King David, who had said of Jehovah: "You have ascended on high; you have carried away captives; you have taken gifts in the form of men." (Psalm 68:18) After the Israelites had been in the Promised Land for some years, Jehovah figuratively "ascended" Mount Zion and made Jerusalem the capital of the kingdom of Israel with David as its king. But who were the "gifts in the form of men"? They were men taken captive during the conquest of the land. Some of these captives were later made available to the Levites to help with the work at the tabernacle.—Ezra 8:20.

4. In fulfillment of Psalm 68:18, in what way did Jehovah 'ascend on high,' and who were the "gifts in the form of men"?



Empathy helps elders to encourage those who are downhearted

Unity among elders promotes unity in the congregation



⁵ In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul indicates that the psalmist's words have a greater fulfillment in the Christian congregation. Paraphrasing Psalm 68:18, Paul writes: "Now to each one of us undeserved kindness was given according to how the Christ measured out the free gift. Wherefore he says: 'When he ascended on high he carried away captives; he gave gifts in men.'" (Ephesians 4:7, 8) Paul here applies this psalm to Jesus as God's representative. Jesus "conquered the world" by his faithful course. (John 16:33) He also triumphed over death and over Satan by reason of God's resurrecting him from the dead. (Acts 2:24; Hebrews 2:14) In 33 C.E., the resurrected Jesus ascended "far above all the heavens"—higher than all other heavenly creatures. (Ephesians 4:9, 10; Philippians 2:9-11) As a conqueror, Jesus took "captives" from the enemy. How so?

⁶ When on earth, Jesus demonstrated his

5. (a) How does Paul indicate that Psalm 68:18 has a fulfillment in the Christian congregation? (b) In what way did Jesus 'ascend on high'?

6. Starting at Pentecost 33 C.E., how did the ascended Jesus begin despoiling Satan's house, and what did he do with the "captives"?

power over Satan by delivering those held in bondage to the demons. It was as if Jesus invaded Satan's house, bound him, and seized his goods. (Matthew 12:22-29) Just think, once resurrected and entrusted with 'all authority in heaven and on earth,' what plundering Jesus could then do! (Matthew 28:18) Starting at Pentecost 33 C.E., the ascended Jesus, as God's representative, began despoiling Satan's house by 'carrying away captives'—men who had long been in slavery to sin and death and under Satan's control. These "captives" willingly became "Christ's slaves, doing the will of God whole-souled." (Ephesians 6:6) Jesus, in effect, wrenched them from Satan's control and, on Jehovah's behalf, gave them to the congregation as "gifts in men." Imagine Satan's helpless rage as they were snatched from under his very nose!

⁷ Do we find such "gifts in men" in the congregation today? Indeed, we do! We find them serving as elders, working hard as 'evangelizers, shepherds, and teachers'

7. (a) In what capacities do the "gifts in men" serve in the congregations? (b) What opportunity has Jehovah given to each man who serves as an elder?

in the more than 87,000 congregations of God's people earth wide. (Ephesians 4:11) Satan would like nothing better than for them to mistreat the flock. But that is not why God through Christ has given them to the congregation. Rather, Jehovah has provided these men for the well-being of the congregation, and they are accountable to him for the sheep entrusted to them. (Hebrews 13:17) If you serve as an elder, Jehovah has given you a wonderful opportunity to prove yourself a gift, or blessing, to your brothers. You can do so by fulfilling four important responsibilities.

When There Is a Need for "Readjustment"

⁸ First, the "gifts in men" are provided "with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones," says Paul. (Ephesians 4:12) The Greek noun rendered "readjustment" refers to putting something "into proper alignment." As imperfect humans, we all need to be readjusted from time to time—to have our thinking, attitudes, or conduct brought "into proper alignment" with God's thinking and will. Jehovah has lovingly provided "gifts in men" to help us make the needed adjustments. How do they do this?

⁹ At times, an elder may be called upon to help a sheep who has erred, who perhaps has 'taken some false step before he is aware of it.' How can an elder help? "Try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness," says Galatians 6:1. Hence, when offering counsel, an elder would not scold the erring one, employing harsh words. Counsel should encourage, not "terrify," the one receiving it. (2 Corinthians 10:9; compare Job 33:7.) The individual may already feel

ashamed, so a loving shepherd avoids crushing that one's spirit. When counsel, even firm reproof, is clearly motivated by and given in love, it is likely to realign the thinking or conduct of the erring one, thus restoring him.—2 Timothy 4:2.

¹⁰ In providing "gifts in men" for our readjustment, Jehovah had in mind that elders be refreshing spiritually and worthy of imitation by his people. (1 Corinthians 16:17, 18; Philippians 3:17) Readjusting others involves not only correcting those taking a wrong course but also helping faithful ones to stick to the right course.* Today, with so many problems that tend to dishearten, many need encouragement to hold on. Some may need tender help to align their thinking with God's. For example, some faithful Christians struggle with deep feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness. Such "depressed souls" may feel that Jehovah could never love them and that even their best efforts to serve God could never be acceptable to him. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) But this way of thinking is not in alignment with how God truly feels about his worshipers.

¹¹ Elders, what can you do to help such ones? Kindly share with them Scriptural proof that Jehovah cares for each of his servants and reassure them that these Bible texts apply to them personally. (Luke 12:6, 7, 24) Help them to see that Jehovah has 'drawn' them to serve him, so surely he must see value in them. (John 6:44) Assure them that they are not alone—many faithful servants of Jehovah have had similar feelings. The prophet Elijah was once so

* In the Greek Septuagint version, this same verb rendered "readjust" was used at Psalm 17[16]:5, where faithful David prayed that his steps might hold fast to Jehovah's tracks.

8. In what ways do we all need to be readjusted at times?

9. How can an elder help to readjust a sheep who has erred?

10. What does readjusting others involve?

11. What can elders do to help those who struggle with feelings of unworthiness?

deeply depressed that he wanted to die. (1 Kings 19:1-4) Some anointed Christians in the first century felt 'condemned' by their own hearts. (1 John 3:20) There is comfort in knowing that faithful ones in Bible times had "feelings like ours." (James 5:17) You can also review encouraging articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* with the downhearted. Your loving efforts to restore the confidence of such ones will not go unnoticed by the God who has given you as "gifts in men."—Hebrews 6:10.

"Building Up" the Flock

¹² Second, the "gifts in men" are given with a view to "the building up of the body of the Christ." (Ephesians 4:12) Paul here employs a figure of speech. "Building up" calls to mind construction, and "the body of the Christ" refers to people—the members of the anointed Christian congregation. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 5:23, 29, 30) Elders need to help their brothers to grow strong spiritually. Their objective is 'to build up and not to tear down' the flock. (2 Corinthians 10:8) The key to building up the flock is love, for "love builds up."—1 Corinthians 8:1.

¹³ One facet of love that helps elders to build up the flock is empathy. To be empathetic means to feel for others—to identify with their thoughts and feelings, considering their limitations. (1 Peter 3:8) Why is it important for elders to have empathy? Above all because Jehovah—the one who gives the "gifts in men"—is a God of empathy. When his servants are suffering or in pain, he feels for them. (Exodus 3:7; Isaiah

63:9) He is considerate of their limitations. (Psalm 103:14) How, then, can elders show empathy?

¹⁴ When someone discouraged comes to them, they listen, acknowledging that one's feelings. They try to understand the background, personality, and circumstances of their brothers. Then when elders give up-building Scriptural help, the sheep will find it easy to accept because it comes from shepherds who truly understand and care about them. (Proverbs 16:23) Empathy also moves elders to consider the limitations of others and the feelings that may result therefrom. For example, some conscientious Christians may feel guilty because they are not able to do more in serving God, perhaps because of old age or poor health. On the other hand, some may need encouragement to improve their ministry. (Hebrews 5:12; 6:1) Empathy will move elders to find "delightful words" that build others up. (Ecclesiastes 12:10) When Jehovah's sheep are built up and motivated, their love for God will move them to do all they can in serving him!

Men Who Promote Unity

¹⁵ Third, the "gifts in men" are provided so that "we all attain to the oneness in the faith and in the accurate knowledge of the Son of God." (Ephesians 4:13) The phrase "oneness in the faith" signifies unity not only of *beliefs* but also of *believers*. This, then, is another reason why God has given us "gifts in men"—to promote unity among his people. How do they do this?

¹⁶ To begin with, they must maintain uni-

14. In what ways can elders show empathy to others?

15. What is signified by the expression "oneness in the faith"?

16. Why is it important for elders to maintain unity among themselves?

12. What is indicated by the expression "the building up of the body of the Christ," and what is the key to building up the flock?

13. What does it mean to be empathetic, and why is it important for elders to show empathy?

ty among themselves. If the shepherds are divided, the sheep may suffer neglect. Precious time that could be spent in shepherding the flock may be unnecessarily taken up by lengthy meetings and debates over incidental matters. (1 Timothy 2:8) Elders may not automatically agree on every matter they discuss, for they are men having personalities that may vary widely. Unity does not preclude their having different opinions or even expressing them in a balanced way during an open-minded discussion. Elders preserve their unity by listening respectfully to one another without prejudgment. And as long as no Bible principle is being violated, each should be willing to yield to and support the final decision of the body of elders. A yielding spirit shows that they are guided by the "wisdom from above," which is "peaceable, reasonable."—James 3:17, 18.

¹⁷ Elders are also alert to promote unity in the congregation. When divisive influences—such as hurtful gossip, a tendency to impute wrong motives, or a contentious spirit—threaten peace, they readily offer helpful counsel. (Philippians 2:2, 3) For instance, elders may be aware of individuals who are overly critical or who are prone to meddle in the affairs of others, thus becoming busybodies. (1 Timothy 5:13; 1 Peter 4:15) The elders will try to help such ones to recognize that this course is contrary to what we have been taught by God and that each one must "carry his own load." (Galatians 6:5, 7; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12) Using the Scriptures, they will explain that Jehovah leaves many things to our individual conscience, and none of us should judge others over such matters. (Matthew 7:1, 2;

17. How can the elders help to preserve unity in the congregation?

James 4:10-12) To serve together in unity, there must be an atmosphere of trust and respect in the congregation. By offering Scriptural counsel when needed, the "gifts in men" help us to preserve our peace and unity.—Romans 14:19.

Protecting the Flock

¹⁸ Fourth, Jehovah provides the "gifts in men" to protect us from being influenced "by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error." (Ephesians 4:14) The original word for "trickery" is said to mean "cheating at dice" or "skill in manipulating the dice." Does that not remind us of how clever apostates operate? Using slick arguments, they manipulate the Scriptures in an attempt to lure true Christians away from their faith. Elders must be on the watch for such "oppressive wolves"!—Acts 20:29, 30.

¹⁹ Jehovah's sheep need to be protected from other dangers as well. The ancient shepherd David fearlessly protected his

18, 19. (a) The "gifts in men" protect us from whom? (b) From what other danger do the sheep need to be protected, and how do elders act to protect the sheep?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ Who are the "gifts in men," and why has God through Christ given them to the congregation?
- ☐ How do elders fulfill their responsibility to readjust the flock?
- ☐ What can elders do to build up their fellow believers?
- ☐ How can elders preserve the unity of the congregation?

father's flock from predators. (1 Samuel 17:34-36) Today, too, occasions may arise when concerned Christian shepherds have to show courage in order to protect the flock from any who might mistreat or oppress Jehovah's sheep, particularly the more vulnerable ones. Elders will be quick to remove from the congregation willful sinners who deliberately use trickery, deceit, and scheming in order to perpetrate wickedness.*

* For example, see "Questions From Readers" in the November 15, 1979, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 31-2, and "Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked" in the January 1, 1997, issue, pages 26-9.

APPRECIATING THE "GIFTS IN MEN"

"Have regard for those who are working hard among you and . . . give them more than extraordinary consideration in love because of their work."

—1 THESSALONIANS 5:12, 13.

THERE is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) Can you recall the last time you experienced the truthfulness of those words of Jesus? Perhaps it was a gift you gave to someone you dearly love. You had chosen it carefully, for you wanted it to be something your loved one would cherish. The look of delight on your loved one's face—how it warmed your heart! When properly motivated, giving is an expression of love, and expressing love has the power to bring us happiness.

1. According to Acts 20:35, what power does giving have? Illustrate.

—1 Corinthians 5:9-13; compare Psalm 101:7.

²⁰ How thankful we are for the "gifts in men"! In their loving care, we can feel secure, for they tenderly readjust us, lovingly build us up, readily preserve our unity, and courageously protect us. But how should the "gifts in men" view their role in the congregation? And how can we show that we appreciate them? These questions will be discussed in the next article.

20. Why can we feel secure in the care of the "gifts in men"?

² Who, then, could be happier than Jehovah, the Giver of "every good gift"? (James 1:17; 1 Timothy 1:11) Every gift he gives is motivated by love. (1 John 4:8) That certainly is true of the gift that God through Christ has given to the congregation—the "gifts in men." (Ephesians 4:8) The provision of elders to look after the flock is an expression of God's deep love for his people. These men are chosen carefully—they must meet Scriptural qualifications. (1 Tim-

2, 3. (a) Why may it be said that no one is happier than Jehovah, and how can the provision of "gifts in men" cause his heart to rejoice? (b) What would we not want to do with a gift from God?

othy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) They know that they must "treat the flock with tenderness," for then the sheep will have reason to feel grateful for such loving shepherds. (Acts 20:29; Psalm 100:3) When Jehovah sees that his sheep have hearts filled with such gratitude, surely his own heart must rejoice!—Proverbs 27:11.

³ We certainly would not want to diminish the value of a gift from God; neither would we want to be unappreciative of his gifts. Two questions thus arise: How should elders view their role in the congregation? And how can the rest of the flock show that they appreciate the "gifts in men"?

'We Are Your Fellow Workers'

⁴ Jehovah has entrusted the "gifts in men" with a measure of authority in the congregation. Of course, elders do not want to misuse their authority, but they know that it is all too easy as imperfect humans to do so. How, then, should they view themselves in relation to the rest of the flock? Consider the illustration used by the apostle Paul. After discussing why the "gifts in men" are provided, Paul wrote: "Let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ. From him all the body, by being harmoniously joined together and being made to cooperate through every joint that gives what is needed, according to the functioning of each respective member in due measure, makes for the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:15, 16) So Paul likens the congregation, including elders and other members, to a human body. Why is this a fitting illustration?

⁵ A human body is made up of many different members but has just one head. However, nothing in the body—not a muscle, not

a nerve, not a vein—is useless. Each member is valuable and contributes something to the health and beauty of the whole. Similarly, the congregation is made up of many different members, but each member—whether young or old, strong or frail—can contribute something to the overall spiritual health and beauty of the congregation. (1 Corinthians 12:14-26) No one need feel that he is too insignificant to matter. At the other extreme, none should feel superior, for we all—shepherds and sheep alike—are part of the *body*, and there is but one *head*, Christ. Paul thus paints a warm picture of the love, care, and respect that we should have for one another. Recognizing this helps elders to have a humble, balanced view of their role in the congregation.

⁶ These "gifts in men" do not seek to control the lives or faith of their fellow worshippers. Paul, although having apostolic authority, humbly told the Corinthians: "Not that we are the masters over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy, for it is by your faith that you are standing." (2 Corinthians 1:24) Paul did not wish to control the faith and way of life of his brothers. Really, he saw no need to do so, for he expressed confidence that they were already faithful men and women who were in Jehovah's organization because they wanted to do what was right. Hence, speaking of himself and his traveling companion Timothy, Paul was, in effect, saying: 'It is our job to work with you to serve God with joy.' (2 Corinthians 1:1) What a humble spirit!

⁷ "Gifts in men" today have the same job. They are 'fellow workers for our joy.' Humble elders realize that it is not for them to decide how much others are able to do in service to

4, 5. (a) To what does Paul liken the congregation, and why is this a fitting illustration? (b) What does Paul's illustration show as to the way we should view and treat one another?

6. Although having apostolic authority, how did Paul display a humble spirit?

7. What do humble elders realize about their role in the congregation, and what confidence do they have in their fellow workers?



Elders, commend others for their whole-souled efforts

God. They know that while they may encourage others to expand or improve their ministry, service to God should stem from a willing heart. (Compare 2 Corinthians 9:7.) They are confident that if their fellow workers are joy-

ful, they will do all they can. It is thus their heartfelt desire to help their brothers to “serve Jehovah with rejoicing.”—Psalm 100:2.

Helping All to Serve With Joy

⁸ Elders, how can you help your brothers to serve with joy? *You can encourage by example.* (1 Peter 5:3) Let your zeal and joy in the ministry show, and others may be heartened to imitate your example. *Commend others for their whole-souled efforts.* (Ephesians 4:29) Warm and genuine commendation helps others to feel useful and needed. It encourages the sheep to want to do their best to serve God. *Avoid unfavorable comparisons.* (Galatians 6:4) Such comparisons tend to discourage rather than motivate others to improve. Besides, Jehovah’s sheep are individuals—with different circumstances and abilities. Like Paul, *express confidence in your brothers.* Love “believes all things,” so we do well to believe that our brothers love God and want to please him. (1 Corinthians 13:7) When you ‘show honor to others,’ you draw out the best in them. (Romans 12:10) Be assured that when the sheep are encour-

8. What are some ways in which elders can help their brothers to serve Jehovah with joy?

aged and refreshed, most will do all they can in serving God, and they will find joy in that service.—Matthew 11:28-30.

⁹ Humbly viewing yourself as a ‘fellow worker’ will help *you* to serve with joy and to appreciate the unique gifts of your fellow elders. Each elder has his own talents and abilities that he can use for the benefit of the congregation. (1 Peter 4:10) One may be gifted in teaching. Another may be an effective organizer. Yet another may be exceptionally approachable because of his warmth and compassion. The fact is, no elder has every gift to the same degree. Does having a particular gift—say, the gift of teaching—make one elder superior to another? Not at all! (1 Corinthians 4:7) On the other hand, there is no need to begrudge the gift another has or to feel inadequate when another elder’s ability brings him commendation from others. Remember, you yourself have gifts that Jehovah sees in you. And he can help you to cultivate those gifts and use them for the benefit of your brothers.—Philippians 4:13.

‘Be Obedient and Be Submissive’

¹⁰ When we receive a gift, it is only fitting to express appreciation. “Show yourselves thankful,” says Colossians 3:15. What, then, about the “gifts in men,” the precious gift that Jehovah has given us? Of course, we are primarily thankful to Jehovah, the generous Gift-Giver. But what about the “gifts in men” themselves? How can we show that we appreciate them?

¹¹ We can demonstrate our appreciation

9. What view of fellow elders will help each elder to serve with joy?

10. Why is it only fitting that we express appreciation for the “gifts in men”?

11. (a) How may we demonstrate our appreciation for the “gifts in men”? (b) What is the significance of the expressions “be obedient” and “be submissive”?

**By their zealous example in the ministry,
elders can help family members and
others to serve with joy**

for the “gifts in men” by being quick to heed their Bible-based counsel and decisions. The Bible advises us: “Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you.” (Hebrews 13:17) Notice that we must not only “be obedient” but also “be submissive” to those taking the lead. The Greek word for “be submissive” literally means “be you yielding under.” Commenting on the expressions “be obedient” and “be submissive,” Bible scholar R. C. H. Lenski says: “One obeys when one agrees with what he is told to do, is persuaded of its correctness and profitableness; one yields . . . when he has a contrary opinion.” When we understand and agree with the direction of those taking the lead, obedience may come readily. But what if we do not understand the reason behind a particular decision?

¹² Here is where we may need to be submissive, or yielding. Why? For one thing, we need to trust that these spiritually qualified men have our best interests at heart. After all, they well know that they must render an account to Jehovah for the sheep committed to their care. (James 3:1) In addition, we do well to remember that we may not know all the confidential facts that led them to an informed decision.—Proverbs 18:13.

¹³ What about being submissive when it comes to judicial decisions? Granted, this

12. Why should we be submissive, or yielding, even when we do not fully understand the reason behind a particular decision?

13. What can help us to be submissive when it comes to the judicial decisions of the elders?



may not be easy, especially if a decision is made to disfellowship someone we love—a relative or a close friend. Here again, it is best to yield to the judgment of the “gifts in men.” They are in a position to be more objective than we can be, and they may know more of the facts. These brothers often agonize over such decisions; it is a sobering responsibility to ‘judge for Jehovah.’ (2 Chronicles 19:6) They make every effort to be merciful, for they are mindful that God is “ready to forgive.” (Psalm 86:5) But they must also keep the congregation clean, and the Bible directs that they disfellowship unrepentant wrongdoers. (1 Corinthians 5:11-13) In many cases the wrongdoer himself accepts the decision. The discipline may be just what he needs to come to his senses. If we, his loved ones, are submissive when it comes to the decision, we may thereby



We appreciate our hardworking elders!

be helping him to benefit from the discipline.—Hebrews 12:11.

“Give Them More Than Extraordinary Consideration”

¹⁴ We can also demonstrate our appreciation for the “gifts in men” by showing them consideration. In writing to the congregation in Thessalonica, Paul admonished its members: “Have regard for those who are working hard among you and presiding over you in the Lord and admonishing you; and . . . give them more than extraordinary consideration in love because of their work.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13) “Working hard”—does that not describe the devoted elders who unselfishly give of themselves in our behalf? Consider, for a moment, the heavy load these dear brothers carry.

¹⁵ In many cases they are family men who must work secularly in order to provide for their families. (1 Timothy 5:8) If the elder has children, these young ones need time and attention from their father. He may

14, 15. (a) According to 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13, why do the elders deserve our consideration? (b) Why may it be said that the elders are ‘working hard among us’?

need to help them with their schoolwork, as well as schedule some time for them to expend their youthful energy in wholesome recreation. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4) Most important, he cares for the spiritual needs of his family, regularly conducting a family Bible study, working with them in the field ministry, and taking them to Christian meetings. (Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Ephesians 6:4) Let us not forget that in addition to these responsibilities that are common to many of us, elders have additional duties: preparing for meeting parts, making shepherding calls, caring for the spiritual welfare of the congregation and, when necessary, handling judicial cases. Some carry extra responsibility in connection with circuit assemblies, district conventions, Kingdom Hall construction, and Hospital Liaison Committees. Truly, these brothers are “working hard”!

¹⁶ How can we show them consideration? A Bible proverb says: “A word at its right time is O how good!” (Proverbs 15:23; 25:11) So words of sincere appreciation and encouragement can show them that we do not take their hard work for granted. Also, we should be reasonable in what we expect of them. On the one hand, we should feel free to approach them for help. There may

16. Describe ways in which we can show consideration for the elders.

be times when 'our very heart is in severe pain' and we need Scriptural encouragement, guidance, or counsel from those who are "qualified to teach" God's Word. (Psalm 55:4; 1 Timothy 3:2) At the same time, we need to remember that there is only so much time that an elder can give us, for he cannot neglect the needs of his own family or of others in the congregation. Having "fellow feeling" for these hardworking brothers, we would not want to make unreasonable demands on them. (1 Peter 3:8) Rather, let us be appreciative for whatever time and attention they can reasonably give us.—Philippians 4:5.

¹⁷ What about the wives of the elders? Do they not also deserve our consideration? After all, they are sharing their husbands with the congregation. This often calls for sacrifices on their part. Occasionally, elders must spend evening hours caring for congregation matters when they could otherwise be spending time with their families. In many congregations faithful Christian women are willingly making such sacrifices so that their husbands can care for Jehovah's sheep.—Compare 2 Corinthians 12:15.

¹⁸ How can we show that we do not take these faithful Christian sisters for granted? Certainly by not being unreasonably demanding of their husbands. But let us also not forget the power of simple words of appreciation. Proverbs 16:24 says: "Pleasant sayings are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and a healing to the bones." Consider an experience. Following a Christian meeting, a married couple approached an elder and asked to talk to him about their teenage son. While the elder spoke with the cou-

17, 18. What sacrifices are made by many wives whose husbands are elders, and how can we show that we do not take these faithful sisters for granted?

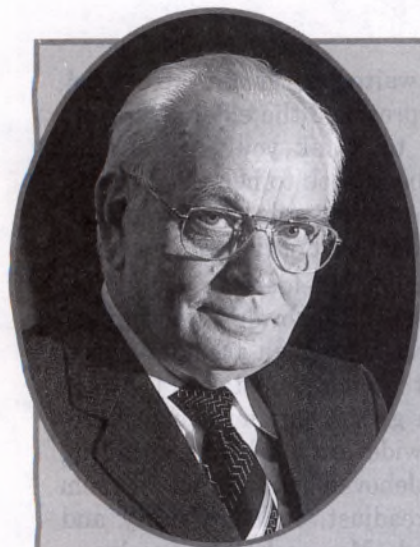
ple, his wife waited patiently. Afterward, the mother approached the elder's wife and said: "I want to thank you for the time that your husband took to help my family." Those simple, sweet words of appreciation truly touched the heart of that elder's wife.

¹⁹ The provision of elders to look after the sheep is one of Jehovah's 'good gifts.' (James 1:17) No, these men are not perfect; like all of us, they make mistakes. (1 Kings 8:46) Yet, as a group, elders in the congregations worldwide are faithfully fulfilling the objectives Jehovah had in mind for them—namely, to readjust, build up, unify, and protect the flock. May each elder resolve to continue caring for Jehovah's sheep tenderly, thereby proving himself a gift, or blessing, to his brothers. And let all of us be determined to show our appreciation for the "gifts in men" by being obedient and submissive to them and by showing them consideration for their hard work. How thankful we can be that Jehovah has lovingly provided men who, in effect, say to his sheep: 'It is our job to help you serve God with joy!'

19. (a) Elders, as a group, are faithfully fulfilling what objectives? (b) What should all of us be determined to do?

How Would You Respond?

- ☐ Why can the congregation fittingly be compared to a body?
- ☐ How can elders help their brothers to serve Jehovah with joy?
- ☐ Why should we be not only obedient but also submissive to those taking the lead?
- ☐ In what ways can we show consideration for the elders?



KEEPING MY PROMISE TO SERVE GOD

AS TOLD BY FRANZ GUDLIKIES

Only four of my company of
over a hundred soldiers were left alive.
Faced with death, I fell to my knees and
promised God, 'If I survive the war,
I will serve you always.'

I MADE that promise 54 years ago, in April 1945, when I was a soldier in the German army. It was shortly before the end of World War II, and the Soviet army was making an all-out push toward Berlin. Our men were positioned near the town of Seelow on the Oder River, less than 40 miles from Berlin. There we were pounded night and day by heavy artillery fire, and my company was being decimated.

It was then, for the first time in my life, that I broke down and prayed in tears to God. I recalled a Bible text my God-fearing mother often quoted: "Call me in the day of distress. I shall rescue you, and you will glorify me." (Psalm 50:15) There in the trenches and fearing for my life, I made the above-mentioned promise to God. How was I able to keep it? And how was it that I had become a member of the German army?

Growing Up in Lithuania

In 1918, during World War I, Lithuania declared its independence and established

a democratic system of government. I was born in 1925 in the district of Memel (Klaipėda) near the Baltic Sea. The district had just been incorporated into Lithuania the year before my birth.

My five sisters and I had a happy childhood. Father was like a close friend, always doing things with us children. Our parents were members of the Evangelical Church, but they did not attend services because Mother was offended by the hypocrisy of the minister. Yet, she loved God and his Word, the Bible, which she read avidly.

In 1939, Germany seized the part of Lithuania where we lived. Then, early in 1943, I was called up for military service in the German army. One of the battles left me wounded, but after recovering from the injuries, I returned to the Eastern Front. By this time the tide of war had changed and the Germans were in retreat before the Soviet army. It was then that I narrowly escaped being killed, as related in the introduction.

Keeping My Promise

During the war, my parents moved to Oschatz, Germany, just southeast of Leipzig. In the aftermath of the war, it was difficult to locate them. But how happy we were finally to be reunited! Not long afterward, in April 1947, I accompanied Mother to a public talk given by Max Schubert, one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Mother believed that she had found the true religion, and after attending a few meetings, I came to share her belief.

Shortly thereafter, Mother fell from a ladder, sustaining injuries from which she died some months later. While in the hospital before her death, she encouraged me warmly: "I have often prayed that at least one of my children might find the way to God. Now I see that my prayers have been answered, and I can die in peace." How I look forward to the time when Mother will awaken from death and learn that her prayers were fulfilled!—John 5:28.

On August 8, 1947, just four months after hearing Brother Schubert's talk, I was baptized at an assembly in Leipzig in symbol of my dedication to Jehovah God. At last I was taking steps toward fulfilling my promise to God. Soon I became a pioneer, as full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called. At the time there were almost 400 pioneers living in what later became the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany.

Early Tests of Faith

A neighbor in Oschatz tried to interest me in Marxism, offering a State-sponsored university education if I would join the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). I turned down the offer, even as Jesus turned down Satan's offer.—Matthew 4:8-10.

One day in April 1949, two policemen came to my workplace and demanded that I accompany them. I was taken to the local of-

fice of the Soviet intelligence service where I was accused of working for capitalists in the West. I could prove my innocence, they said, by continuing my house-to-house work but reporting to them anyone who talked negatively about the Soviet Union or the SED or anyone who visited the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. When I refused to cooperate, I was locked in a cell. Later, I was taken before what appeared to be a military court. My sentence: 15 years of hard labor in Siberia!

I remained calm, and that impressed the officers. Then they told me that my sentence would remain in force but that it would be sufficient for me to report once a week until I was ready to cooperate with them. Wanting the advice of more mature Witnesses, I traveled to Magdeburg, where the Watch Tower Society's branch office was then located. The trip was not easy, since I was under surveillance. Ernst Wauer, who was serving in the Legal Department in Magdeburg, told me: "Fight and you will win. Compromise and you will be defeated. That is what we learned in the concentration camp."* That advice helped me to keep my promise to serve God.

Ban and Rearrest

In July 1950, I was recommended to serve as a traveling overseer. However, on August 30, the police raided our premises in Magdeburg, and our preaching work was banned. So my assignment was changed. Paul Hirschberger and I were to work with about 50 congregations, spending two or three days with each one, helping the brothers to be organized to carry on their ministry under the ban. In the months that followed, I escaped arrest by the police six times!

* Ernst Wauer's life story appeared in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1991, pages 25 to 29.

One of the congregations had been infiltrated by someone who betrayed us to the *Stasi*, the State Security Service. Thus, in July 1951, Paul and I were arrested on the street by five men with drawn guns. Looking back, we could see that we had not relied on Jehovah's organization as much as we should. We had been advised by our older brothers never to travel together. Overconfidence had led to the loss of our freedom! Moreover, we had not discussed beforehand what we would say if we were arrested.

Alone in my cell, I tearfully begged Jehovah for help that I might not betray my brothers or compromise my faith. After I fell asleep, I was suddenly awakened by my friend Paul's voice. Just above my cell was the room where he was being questioned by the *Stasi*. Since it was a warm and humid night, the balcony door was open, and I could faintly hear everything. Later, when I was questioned, I gave the same answers, which surprised the officials. Mother's favorite Bible text, "Call me in the day of distress. I shall rescue you," kept coming back to my mind, and I was greatly encouraged.—Psalm 50:15.

Following the interrogation, Paul and I spent five months in pretrial detention in the *Stasi* prison in Halle and later in Magdeburg. While in Magdeburg, I occasionally caught glimpses of our then closed branch facilities. I wished I could have been working there rather than be in prison! In February 1952 our sentence was announced: "10 years in prison and 20 years' loss of civil rights."

Keeping Faith in Prison

Jehovah's Witnesses who had been sentenced to at least ten years wore special identification for some of their time in prison. A red tape was sewn to one trouser leg and to one arm of our jacket. Also, a small, round piece of red cardboard was attached

to the outside of our cell door to warn guards that we were dangerous criminals.

The authorities actually considered us the worst of criminals. We were not allowed to have a Bible because as a guard explained: "One of Jehovah's Witnesses with a Bible in his hand is like a criminal with a gun in his hand." In order to collect fragments of the Bible, we read the works of the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, who often quoted Bible texts in his books. We learned these Bible texts by heart.

Prior to my arrest in 1951, I had become engaged to Elsa Riemer. She visited me as often as possible in prison and sent me a food parcel once a month. She also hid spiritual food in her parcels. Once, she stuffed articles from a *Watchtower* in some sausages. Guards often sliced sausages open to check if something was hidden inside, but this time the parcel arrived shortly before the end of the workday, and it was not checked.

At the time, Karl Heinz Kleber and I shared a small cell with three non-Witness inmates. How were we to read *The Watchtower* without being observed? Well, we pretended to be reading a book, but inside we had concealed the *Watchtower* articles. We also passed on this precious spiritual food to fellow Witnesses in prison.

While in prison we also took advantage of opportunities to tell others about God's Kingdom. I was thrilled to see one of my fellow inmates become a believer as a result.—Matthew 24:14.

Return to the Full-Time Ministry

On April 1, 1957, after almost six years behind bars, I was released. Less than two weeks later, I married Elsa. When the *Stasi* heard of my release, they sought an excuse to have me returned to prison. To avoid that possibility, Elsa and I crossed the border to live in West Berlin.



Gedenkstätte Moritzplatz Magdeburg für die Opfer politischer Gewalt, Foto: Fred Frösche, Magdeburg

I was imprisoned here in Magdeburg

When we arrived in West Berlin, the Society wanted to know what our plans were. We explained that one of us would pioneer while the other would take a secular job.

“How would you like it if you *both* became pioneers?” we were asked.

“If that is possible,” we responded, “we will start immediately.”

Thus we were given a small stipend each month to help support ourselves, and we commenced serving as special pioneers in 1958. What joy we had from observing individuals with whom we studied the Bible change their lives to become servants of Jehovah! The next ten years in special-pioneer service taught us to work together closely as man and wife. Elsa was always at my side, even when I was repairing the car. We also read, studied, and prayed together.

In 1969 we were assigned to the traveling work, visiting a different congregation each week to minister to the needs of its members. Josef Barth, a man experienced in the traveling work, offered me this advice: “If you want to make a success of your assignment, just be a brother to the brothers.” I tried to apply that advice. As a result, we had a very warm and harmonious relationship with fellow Witnesses, which made it easy to offer counsel when it was needed.



When we married in 1957



With Elsa today

In 1972, Elsa was diagnosed with cancer and had surgery. Later, she also developed rheumatism. Though plagued by pain, she still accompanied me each week, serving the congregations, working with the sisters in the ministry as much as she could.

Adjusting Needs

In 1984 my in-laws came to be in need of constant care, so we left the traveling work to help care for them until they died four years later. (1 Timothy 5:8) Then, in 1989, Elsa became gravely ill. Happily, she has recovered somewhat, but it has been necessary for me to look after all household chores. I am still learning to deal with someone who suffers constant pain. Yet, despite the stress and strain, we have retained our love of spiritual things.

Today, thankfully, we are still on the pioneer list. We have come to appreciate, however, that what is important is, not the position we have or how much we are able to do, but that we remain faithful. We want to serve our God, Jehovah, not for just a few years, but for all eternity. Our experience has been wonderful training for the future. And Jehovah has given us the strength to praise him even under the most trying of circumstances.—Philippians 4:13.

Rejoice in Jehovah and Be Joyful

THE successful completion of any worthwhile project is always a time for rejoicing. The graduation exercises held on March 13, 1999, at the Watchtower Educational Center at Patterson, New York, was certainly such an occasion for the 48 students of the 106th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead.

The opening remarks by Theodore Jaracz, a member of the Governing Body, graduate of the seventh class of Gilead, and chairman of the graduation program, highlighted the words of Psalm 32:11: "Rejoice in Jehovah and be joyful, you righteous ones." Explaining why it was appropriate for all to rejoice on this occasion, he said: "It is because of what Jehovah is accomplishing with those who are upright in heart, including our Gilead students, that we rejoice on occasions like this." While the students had made plans to come to Gilead School and had exerted themselves diligently to qualify for missionary service, Jehovah is the one who made it possible for everything to come to a successful finish. (Proverbs 21:5; 27:1) That, Brother Jaracz emphasized, is the reason for 'rejoicing in Jehovah.'

Among those in the Patterson auditorium were the family members and guests of the students who had come from 12 countries to witness this joyous event. As the 5,198 in attendance—including members of the Bethel family in Brooklyn, Patterson, and Wallkill, tied in by audio and video—anticipated the program that was to follow, it was evident that a joyful spirit prevailed.

Exhorted to Maintain a Joyful Spirit

As Brother Jaracz concluded his opening remarks, he introduced the first of five speakers, who had prepared encouraging Scriptural admonition not only for the Gilead graduates but for all in attendance.

First to speak was William Malenfant, a graduate of the 34th class of Gilead, now serving as a helper to the Teaching Committee of the Governing Body. In connection with his theme "'Everything' Is Not Vanity!" based on Ecclesiastes 1:2, he raised the question: "Did Solomon really mean that *everything*, in the absolute sense of the word, is vanity?" The answer: "No. He was pointing out that human undertakings that ignore what the divine will is, pursuits that are apart from what the divine will is—all those things are vanity." In contrast, worshiping the true God, Jehovah, is not vanity; neither is studying God's Word, the Bible, and teaching it to others. God does not forget such endeavors by his servants. (Hebrews 6:10) In fact, even if calamity should come the way of those who have found favor with God, they will "prove to be wrapped up in the bag of life with Jehovah." (1 Samuel 25:29) What a heartwarming thought! Remembering these points can help all of Jehovah's worshipers to maintain a joyful spirit.

John Barr, a member of the Governing Body, encouraged the graduating class with his talk "Find Delight in Your Missionary Assignment." He showed that missionary service is something that has always been



106th 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) Deakin, D.; Puopolo, M.; Laguna, M.; Davault, S.; Dominguez, E.; Burke, J. (2) Gauter, S.; Vazquez, W.; Seabrook, A.; Mosca, A.; Helly, L.; Breward, L. (3) Brandon, T.; Olivares, N.; Coleman, D.; Scott, V.; Petersen, L.; McLeod, K. (4) McLeod, J.; Thompson, J.; Luberisse, F.; Speta, B.; Lehtimäki, M.; Laguna, J. (5) Gauter, U.; Dominguez, R.; Helly, F.; Smith, M.; Beyer, D.; Mosca, A. (6) Scott, K.; Seabrook, V.; Speta, R.; Coleman, R.; Breward, L.; Davault, W. (7) Smith, D.; Lehtimäki, T.; Petersen, P.; Thompson, G.; Vazquez, R.; Beyer, A. (8) Luberisse, M.; Deakin, C.; Brandon, D.; Puopolo, D.; Olivares, O.; Burke, S.

very close to the heart of Jehovah God. “It was something that was intrinsically bound up with Jehovah’s expression of love for the world. He sent his only-begotten Son to this earth. Jesus was the greatest missionary, the ultimate missionary.” While the graduates could contemplate the changes Jesus had to make to be successful in his assignment on earth, the benefits of Jesus’ missionary service are still available to all who will take advantage of them. This is be-

cause, as Brother Barr pointed out, Jesus delighted in doing God’s work, and he also loved the sons of mankind. (Proverbs 8:30, 31) Brother Barr urged the graduates to stick to their assignments, not simply as a matter of endurance, but because they delight in doing so. “Rely on Jehovah; he will not let you down,” he entreated the class. —Psalm 55:22.

“Walking in the Name of Jehovah Forever” was the theme chosen by the next

speaker, Lloyd Barry, another member of the Governing Body. Having served as a missionary for over 25 years in Japan after completing the 11th class of Gilead, Brother Barry related some of the experiences of early missionaries and described the challenges they had to face. What practical advice did he have for the graduating class? "Above all, maintain your spirituality. Also, learn the language and the culture. Keep your sense of humor. And stick to the work; do not get tired or give out." Brother Barry told the graduates that in their foreign assignments, they will meet many people who walk in the name of various gods and deities, and he reminded them of Micah's words: "All the peoples, for their part, will walk each one in the name of its god; but we, for our part, shall walk in the name of Jehovah our God to time indefinite, even forever." (Micah 4:5) The example of former missionaries is surely a powerful motivation for all God's servants to go on walking in Jehovah's name and serving him faithfully.

Next on the program was Gilead instructor Lawrence Bowen. The theme of his presentation raised the question, "What Will You Prove to Be?" He showed that success in God's service depends on faith and trust in Jehovah. Complete reliance on Jehovah

brought King Asa a resounding victory over an enemy army of one million men. Yet he was reminded by the prophet Azariah of the need to continue relying on God: "Jehovah is with you as long as you prove to be with him." (2 Chronicles 14:9-12; 15:1, 2) Since God's name, Jehovah, conveys the thought that he proves to be whatever is needed to fulfill his purpose—whether that means being a Provider, a Protector, or even an Executioner—missionaries who rely on Jehovah and who work in harmony with his purpose will prove to be successful in their assignments. (Exodus 3:14) "Never forget," concluded Brother Bowen, "that as long as you make Jehovah's purpose your purpose, he will cause you to become whatever is needed to fulfill your assignment."

The final speaker on this portion of the program was Wallace Liverance, former missionary and now the school registrar. His discourse, entitled "Keep God's Word Alive and at Work in You," called attention to the unfailing message, or promise, of God that is always moving forward to completion. (Hebrews 4:12) It influences the lives of those who allow it to do so. (1 Thessalonians 2:13) How can that word be kept alive and at work in our lives? Through diligent Bible study. Brother Liverance reminded the graduates of the methods of Bible study learned at Gilead that included a reading and exposition of the sense and application of God's Word. He quoted the words of Albert Schroeder, a member of the Governing Body who served as chairman of the committee that established Gilead School over 50 years ago: "By using the context, one is able to obtain the full, accurate, spiritual force made available by God in his Word." This approach to Bible study keeps God's Word alive and at work.

In Our Next Issue

Vandalism—Why?

The Creator Can Add
Meaning to Your Life

'Fires of Curiosity
in Heart and Mind'

Joyful Experiences and Interviews

Following the talks, the audience was treated to some joyful experiences from the students. Under the direction of Mark Noumair, former missionary and current Gilead instructor, a group of students related and demonstrated how they endeavored to give a witness in a variety of situations. Some were able to start and conduct Bible studies with people in the territory by being observant of their circumstances and expressions and by showing personal interest. Thus the students were 'paying constant attention to themselves and to their teaching' and were truly interested in helping others to gain salvation.—1 Timothy 4:16.

Many practical suggestions were offered, and the joy of missionary service was also made evident by a number of experienced brothers who were receiving training in the school for branch committee members conducted at the Watchtower Educational Center. Brothers Samuel Herd and Robert Johnson of the headquarters staff conducted lively interviews with representatives from the Society's branch offices in Bolivia, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, Central African Republic, Dominican Republic, Papua New Guinea, and Cameroon.

Following the experiences and interviews, Gerrit Lösch, a graduate of the 41st class of Gilead and now a member of the Governing Body, gave the final talk on the thought-provoking theme "Are You a 'Desirable Person'?" Brother Lösch first reminded the graduates that Jesus, the perfect Son of God, was not considered desirable by the people, but "he was despised and was avoided by men." (Isaiah 53:3) So it is not surprising that today in many parts of the world, the missionaries are viewed as persona non grata, personally unacceptable or unwelcome. On the other hand, during Daniel's long years of service in Babylon,

through an angel the Creator three times called Daniel "very desirable." (Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19) What made Daniel that way? He never compromised Bible principles when adjusting to the culture in Babylon; he was honest in every way, never using his position for personal advantage; and he was a zealous student of God's Word. (Daniel 1:8, 9; 6:4; 9:2) He also prayed regularly to Jehovah and was quick to give God the glory for his accomplishments. (Daniel 2:20) By following Daniel's example, God's servants can prove to be desirable, not necessarily to the world, but to Jehovah God.

To conclude the spiritually uplifting program, the chairman read a sample of the telegrams and messages that had come from around the world. Then, each of the 24 couples received their diplomas, and the country to which they were assigned was announced. Finally, a class representative read a letter addressed to the Governing Body and the Bethel family, expressing the appreciation the class felt for the training and preparation they had received in the past five months.

As the program came to its end, "a rejoicing even with thanksgivings" could be heard among the departing crowd.—Nehemiah 12:27.

Class Statistics

Number of countries represented: 10

Number of countries assigned to: 19

Number of students: 48

Number of married couples: 24

Average age: 33

Average years in truth: 16

Average years in full-time ministry: 13



PAUL'S FELLOW WORKERS

Who Were They?

IN THE Bible book of Acts and in the letters of Paul are mentioned some one hundred individuals, members of the first-century Christian congregation who had contact with the "apostle to the nations." (Romans 11:13) A lot is known about a number of them. Likely you are familiar with the activities of Apollos, Barnabas, and Silas. On the other hand, you would probably find it more difficult to say much about Archippus, Claudia, Damaris, Linus, Persis, Pudens, and Sopater.

In different periods and under varying circumstances, many individuals played an active role in supporting Paul's ministry. Certain ones like Aristarchus, Luke, and Timothy served by the apostle's side for many years. Some were with him when he was in prison or while he was on the move, either as traveling companions or as hosts and hostesses. Sadly, others, such as Alexander, Demas, Hermogenes, and Phygelus, did not persevere in the Christian faith.

When it comes to several of Paul's other friends, like Asyncritus, Hermas, Julia, or Philologus to mention just a few, we know little more about them than their names. In the case of Nereus' sister or Rufus' mother or those of the house of Chloe, we do

not know even that much. (Romans 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 1:11) Nonetheless, an examination of what little information we do possess about these hundred or so individuals throws light on the way the apostle Paul worked. It also teaches us something about the benefits of being surrounded by a large number of fellow believers and working closely with them.

Traveling Companions, Hosts, and Hostesses

The apostle Paul's ministry involved a great deal of traveling. One writer calculates that the distance he covered on land and sea as recorded in Acts alone approached some 10,000 miles. Travel back then was not only fatiguing but also dangerous. Among the various perils he faced were shipwreck, dangers from rivers and from highwaymen, dangers in the wilderness, and dangers at sea. (2 Corinthians 11:25, 26) Appropriately, Paul was rarely alone in his movements from one place to another.

Those who accompanied Paul would be a source of companionship, encouragement, and practical assistance in the ministry. On occasion, Paul left them behind so that they could care for the spiritual needs of new be-

lievers. (Acts 17:14; Titus 1:5) But the presence of companions was likely essential for safety and for support in dealing with the rigors of the journey. So such individuals as Sopater, Secundus, Gaius, and Trophimus, whom we know to have been among Paul's traveling companions, may have fulfilled an important role in the success of his ministry.—Acts 20:4.

No less welcome was the help offered by hosts and hostesses. When Paul arrived in a city where he intended to conduct a preaching campaign or simply to stop overnight, a priority would be to find a place to stay. Anyone who traveled as widely as Paul did would by necessity have to sleep in literally scores of different beds. He could always stay at an inn, but these are described by historians as "dangerous and unsavoury places," so, where possible, Paul probably stayed with fellow believers.

We know the names of some of Paul's hosts and hostesses—Aquila and Prisca, Gaius, Jason, Lydia, Mnason, Philemon, and Philip. (Acts 16:14, 15; 17:7; 18:2, 3; 21:8, 16; Romans 16:23; Philemon 1, 22) In Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, such accommodations provided Paul with a base from which he could organize his missionary activities. In Corinth, Titius Justus also opened his home to provide the apostle with a place from which he could carry on his preaching.—Acts 18:7.

A Multitude of Friends

As may be expected, Paul's acquaintances were remembered in different ways because of the differing circumstances under which he met them. Mary, Persis, Phoebe, Tryphaena, and Tryphosa, for example, were all female fellow believers who were commended for their labors and hard work. (Romans 16:1, 2, 6, 12) Paul baptized Crispus,

Gaius, and the household of Stephanas. Dionysius and Damaris accepted the message of truth from him in Athens. (Acts 17:34; 1 Corinthians 1:14, 16) Andronicus and Junias, "men of note among the apostles" who had been believers longer than Paul, are called his "fellow captives." Perhaps they had been in prison with him on some occasion. These two, like Herodion, Jason, Lucius, and Sosipater, were also spoken of by Paul as his "relatives." (Romans 16:7, 11, 21) While the Greek word used here can mean "fellow-countrymen," the primary meaning of it is "blood relatives of the same generation."

Many of Paul's friends traveled for the sake of the good news. Besides his better-known companions, there are also Achaicus, Fortunatus, and Stephanas, who journeyed from Corinth to Ephesus to confer with Paul about the spiritual condition of their congregation. Artemas and Tychicus were ready to travel to meet up with Titus, who was serving on the island of Crete, and Zenas was to undertake a trip with Apollos.—1 Corinthians 16:17; Titus 3:12, 13.

There are those about whom Paul supplies some small and fascinating detail. We are informed, for example, that Epaenetus was "a firstfruits of Asia," that Erastus was "the city steward" at Corinth, that Luke was a physician, that Lydia was a seller of purple, and that Tertius was the one Paul used to pen his letter to the Romans. (Romans 16:5, 22, 23; Acts 16:14; Colossians 4:14) For any who would like to know more about such individuals, these snippets of information are tantalizing in their brevity.

Others of Paul's companions received personal messages, which are now recorded in the Bible. In his letter to the Colossians, for instance, Paul exhorted Archippus: "Keep watching the ministry which you accepted in the Lord, that you fulfill it." (Colossians 4:

17) Euodia and Syntyche evidently had some personal conflict to resolve. Thus, Paul exhorted them through an unnamed “yokefellow” in Philippi “to be of the same mind in the Lord.” (Philippians 4:2, 3) Surely, this is good counsel for all of us.

Loyal Support While Imprisoned

Paul was in prison several times. (2 Corinthians 11:23) On those occasions the local Christians, when there were any, must have tried to do all they could to make his experience more bearable. When Paul underwent his first imprisonment in Rome, he was allowed to rent his own house for two years and could be visited by his friends. (Acts 28:30) During that period, he wrote letters to the congregations in Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae, as well as to Philemon. These sources tell us much about those who were close to Paul during his detention.

For example, we learn that Onesimus, Philemon’s runaway slave, met up with Paul in Rome, as did Tychicus, who was to accompany Onesimus on his journey back to his master. (Colossians 4:7-9) There was also Epaphroditus, who made the long journey from Philippi with a gift from his congregation and who then fell sick. (Philippians 2:25; 4:18) Working closely with Paul in Rome were Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus who is called Justus, of whom Paul said: “Only these are my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and these very ones have become a strengthening aid to me.” (Colossians 4:10, 11) Along with all these faithful ones, there were the better-known Timothy and Luke, as well as Demas, who later, for love of the world, abandoned Paul.—Colossians 1:1; 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:10; Philemon 24.

Apparently, none of those were from Rome, yet they were there by Paul’s side. Perhaps some had gone specifically to assist him during his imprisonment. No doubt

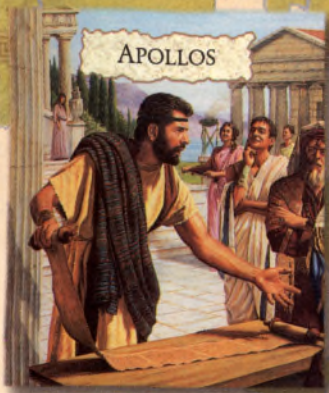
some ran errands for him, others were dispatched on distant missions, and to still others Paul dictated letters. What an eloquent testimony to the intensity of attachment and loyalty that all of these had for Paul and for God’s work!

From the conclusions of some of Paul’s letters, we perceive that he was probably surrounded by a large company of Christian brothers and sisters that go beyond the few names we know. On different occasions, he wrote: “All the holy ones send you their greetings” and, “All those with me send you their greetings.”—2 Corinthians 13:13; Titus 3:15; Philippians 4:22.

During Paul’s critical second imprisonment in Rome when martyrdom was looming, Paul’s fellow workers were very much in his thoughts. He was still active in supervising and coordinating the activities of at least some of them. Titus and Tychicus had been dispatched on missions, Crescens had gone to Galatia, Erastus had stayed in Corinth, Trophimus had been left sick at Miletus, but Mark and Timothy were to come to him. Luke, though, was by Paul’s side, and when the apostle wrote his second letter to Timothy, several other believers, including Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia, were on hand to send their greetings. They were doubtless doing what they could to help Paul. At the same time, Paul himself sent greetings to Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Sadly, however, in that time of trouble, Demas forsook him, and Alexander did him many injuries.—2 Timothy 4:9-21.

“We Are God’s Fellow Workers”

Paul was seldom alone during his preaching activities. “The picture that emerges,” says commentator E. Earle Ellis, “is that of a missionary with a large number of associates. Indeed, Paul is scarcely ever found without companions.” Under the guidance


 APOLLOS


 ARISTARCHUS


 BARNABAS


 LYDIA


 TERTIUS


 TYCHICUS


 ONESIPHORUS

of God's holy spirit, Paul was able to mobilize many people and organize effective missionary campaigns. He was surrounded by close partners, temporary assistants, some strong personalities, and numerous humble servants. Yet, these were not just coworkers. Regardless of the extent to which they worked or associated with Paul, the bond of Christian love and personal friendship is unmistakable.

The apostle Paul had what has been called a "genius for friendship." He did much to take the good news to the nations, but he did not try to do it alone. He cooperated with and made full use of the organized Christian congregation. Paul did not take any credit to himself for the results attained but humbly acknowledged that he was a slave and that

all honor should go to God as the one responsible for the growth.—1 Corinthians 3:5-7; 9:16; Philippians 1:1.

Paul's times were different from ours, but even so, no one in the Christian congregation today should think that he can be or needs to be independent. Rather, we should always work with God's organization, with our local congregation, and with our fellow believers. We need their help, support, and comfort in good times and in troublesome times. We have the precious privilege of being part of an 'entire association of brothers in the world.' (1 Peter 5:9) If we faithfully and lovingly work side by side and in cooperation with all of them, then just like Paul, we too can say that "we are God's fellow workers."—1 Corinthians 3:9.

Safeguarding a Good Name

TO STUDY a beautiful painting carefully can be a rewarding experience. Looking closely, one will note how an artist used hundreds of brushstrokes to apply various pigments on a canvas.

Similarly, a good name is developed, not by one broad stroke of a brush, so to speak, but by many small acts over a period of time. Yes, little by little our reputation is built up through the deeds that we perform.

On the other hand, one misplaced brushstroke can depreciate a painting's value. So it is with our name. Wise King Solomon said: "It is the foolishness of an earthling man that distorts his way." (Proverbs 19:3) All it takes is a little so-called foolishness—perhaps a violent outburst of anger, an immoderate indulgence in alcoholic beverages, or one sexually unchaste act—to sully a fine reputation. (Proverbs 6:32; 14:17; 20:1) How vital, therefore, that we strive to acquire a good name and work zealously to safeguard it.—Compare Revelation 3:5.

