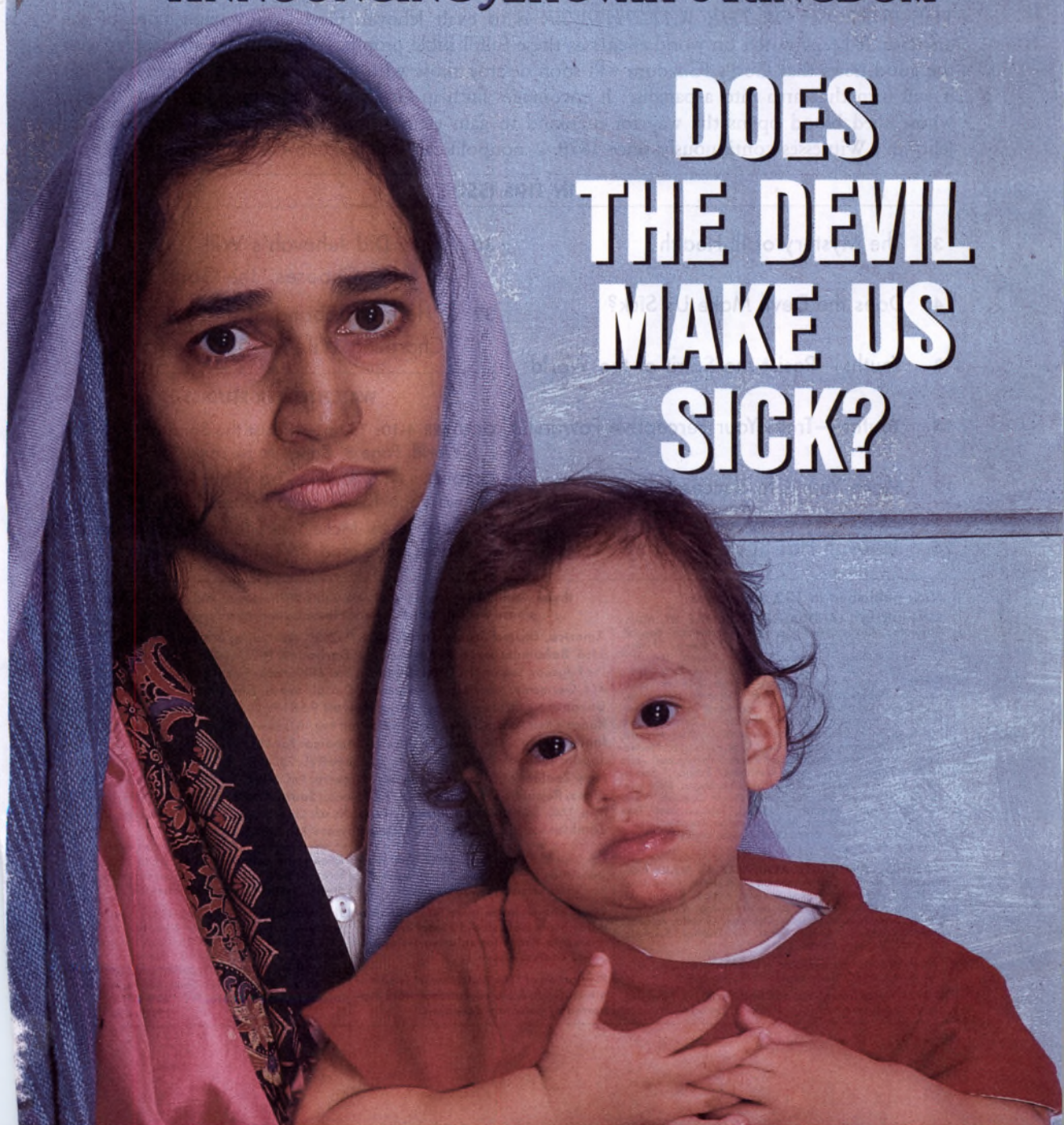


SEPTEMBER 1, 1999

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**DOES
THE DEVIL
MAKE US
SICK?**



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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The Mystery of ILL HEALTH

LITTLE OWMADJI IS SICK WITH DIARRHEA. Hawa, her mother, is worried about dehydration; she heard that her cousin back in the village had recently lost her baby that way. Owmadji's grandmother, Hawa's mother-in-law, wants to take Owmadji to a tribal witch doctor. "A wicked spirit is making the child sick," she says.

"You refused to give her an amulet to wear for protection, and now the problems are starting!"

THIS scene is common in many parts of the world. Hundreds of millions believe that wicked spirits are the hidden cause of illness. Is this true?

Creating the Mystery

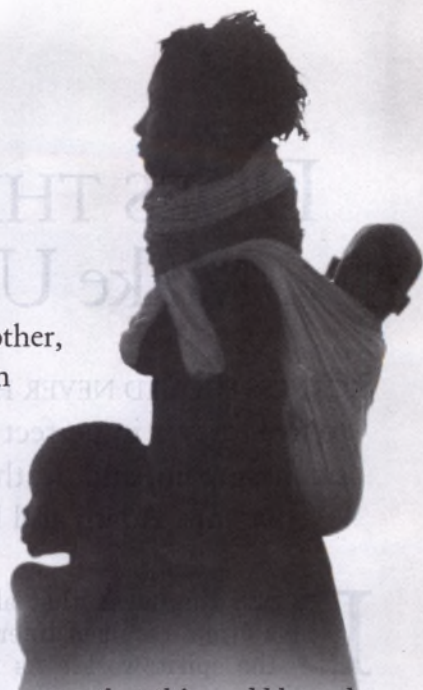
You personally may not believe that unseen spirits cause disease. In fact, you may wonder why anyone would think so, for scientists have shown that most diseases are caused by viruses and bacteria. Remember, though, that humankind did not always know about these tiny pathogens. It was not until the development of the microscope by Antonie van Leeuwenhoek in the 17th century that the microscopic world became visible to the human eye. Even then, it was only thanks to Louis Pasteur's discoveries in the 19th century that science began to understand the relationship between pathogens and disease.

Since the causes of sickness were unknown for most of human history, many superstitious ideas developed, including the theory that all ailments are caused by evil spirits. *The New Encyclopædia Britanni-*

ca suggests one way that this could have developed. It says that early healers tried to treat the sick with different types of roots, leaves, and whatever else was at their disposal. At times, something worked. Then the healer would add to the healing therapy a lot of superstitious rites and practices, which served to conceal the real cure. Thus the healer made sure that people would have to continue using his services. In this way, medicine became shrouded in mystery, and people were encouraged to look to the supernatural for help.

These traditional healing methods live on in a number of lands. Many say that sickness is caused by the spirits of dead ancestors. Others say that God makes us sick and that illness is a punishment for our sins. Even when informed people understand the biological nature of sickness, they may still fear supernatural influences.

Sorcerers and traditional healers use this fear to exploit people. What, then, should we believe? Does it help to look to the spirits for health care? What does the Bible say?



DOES THE DEVIL Make Us Sick?

SICKNESS SHOULD NEVER HAVE EXISTED. God created us to live forever in perfect health. It was a spirit creature, Satan, who caused sickness, pain, and death to afflict the human family when he led our first parents, Adam and Eve, into sin.—GENESIS 3:1-5, 17-19; ROMANS 5:12.

DOES this mean that all sickness is a direct result of interference from the spirit world? As noted in the preceding article, many today think so. Little Owmadji's grandmother did. But was Owmadji's diarrhea—a sometimes fatal disease for young children in the tropics—really caused by unseen spirits?

Satan's Role

The Bible answers this question very clearly. First, it shows that the spirits of our ancestors cannot affect the living. When people die, "they are conscious of nothing at all." They do not have spirits that survive death. They are asleep in the grave, where "there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) In no way can the dead make the living sick!

However, the Bible reveals that wicked spirits do exist. The first rebel in the whole universe was the spirit creature now known as Satan. Others joined him and came to be called demons. Can Satan and the demons cause sickness? It has happened. Some of Jesus' healing miracles involved the expelling of demons. (Luke 9:37-43; 13:10-16) However, most of the cures that Jesus performed were of sicknesses not directly caused by the

demons. (Matthew 12:15; 14:14; 19:2) Similarly today, as a rule, sickness results from natural, not supernatural, causes.

What about witchcraft? Proverbs 18:10 assures us: "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous runs and is given protection." James 4:7 says: "Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you." Yes, God can protect his faithful ones from witchcraft and any other uncanny power. That is one implication of Jesus' words: "The truth will set you free."—John 8:32.

'What about Job?' some may ask. 'Was it not a wicked spirit that made him ill?' Yes, the Bible says that Job's illness was caused by Satan. But Job's case was exceptional. Job had long had divine protection from direct demonic attack. Then Satan challenged Jehovah to strike Job, and because great issues were involved, Jehovah partially withdrew his protection from his worshiper in this one case.

However, God set limits. When he permitted Satan to afflict Job, Satan could make Job sick for a time, but he could not kill him. (Job 2:5, 6) Eventually, Job's suffering ended, and Jehovah rewarded him richly for his integrity. (Job 42:10-17) The prin-



ciples proved by Job's integrity have long since been recorded in the Bible and are evident to all. There is no need for another such test case.

How Does Satan Work?

In almost every instance, the only connection between Satan and human illness is the fact that Satan tempted the first human couple, and they fell into sin. He and his demons are not the direct cause of each and every malady. However, Satan is not above trying to influence us to make unwise decisions and compromise our faith, which might result in damage to our health. He did not bewitch, murder, or strike Adam and Eve with illness. He *persuaded* Eve to disobey God, and Adam followed her path of disobedience. Sickness and death were part of the outcome.—Romans 5:19.

An unfaithful prophet named Balaam was once hired by the king of Moab to curse the nation of Israel, which was threateningly encamped on Moab's borders. Balaam tried to curse Israel, but he failed because the nation was under Jehovah's protection. The Moabites then set out to lure Israel into committing idolatry and sexual immorality. This tactic succeeded, and Israel lost Jehovah's protection.—Numbers 22:5, 6, 12, 35; 24:10; 25:1-9; Revelation 2:14.

We can learn an important lesson from that ancient event. Divine help gives faithful worshipers of God protection from direct attack by wicked spirits. However, Satan may try to get individuals to compromise their faith. He may try to lure them into im-

morality. Or, like a roaring lion, he may try to scare them into acting in a way that deprives them of God's protection. (1 Peter 5:8) That is why the apostle Paul calls Satan "the one having the means to cause death."—Hebrews 2:14.

The grandmother of Owmadji tried to persuade Hawa to use amulets and fetishes as a protection against sickness. What would have happened if Hawa had given in? She would have betrayed a lack of complete trust in Jehovah God, and she could no longer have been confident of his protection.—Exodus 20:5; Matthew 4:10; 1 Corinthians 10:21.

Satan tried persuasion with Job too. Robbing him of his family, his wealth, and his health was not enough. Job was also given very bad counsel by his wife when she said: "Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9) Then he was visited by three "friends" who made a concerted effort to convince him that he was to blame for his sickness. (Job 19:1-3) In this way Satan took advantage of Job's weakened state to try to discourage him and shake his confidence in Jehovah's righteousness. Yet, Job continued to lean on Jehovah as his only hope.—Compare Psalm 55:22.

When we are sick, we too may become depressed. In such a situation, Satan is quick to try to make us act in some way that will compromise our faith. Hence, when illness strikes, it is important to keep in mind that the basic cause of our suffering is likely inherited imperfection rather than some uncanny influence. Remember, faithful Isaac became blind a number of years before his death. (Genesis 27:1) The cause was not wicked spirits but old age. Rachel died while giving birth, not because of Satan, but because of human frailty. (Genesis 35:17-19) Eventually, all the faithful ones of old died—not because of spells or curses but because of inherited imperfection.

Imagining that unseen spirits have a direct influence on every sickness that befalls

us is a snare. It may inspire a morbid fear of the spirits. Then, when we become sick, we might be tempted to try to appease the demons instead of keeping far away from them. If Satan can scare us into resorting to spiritistic practices, that would be a betrayal of the true God, Jehovah. (2 Corinthians 6:15) We should be guided by a respectful fear of God, not by a superstitious fear of his Adversary.—Revelation 14:7.

Little Owmadji already has the best possible protection against wicked spirits. According to the apostle Paul, God considers her “holy” because she has a believing mother, and her mother can pray for God to be with her daughter by means of holy spirit. (1 Corinthians 7:14) Blessed with such accurate knowledge, Hawa was able to seek effective treatment for Owmadji instead of relying on amulets.

Various Causes of Sickness

Most people do not believe in the spirits. When they get sick, they go to a doctor—if they can afford it. Of course, a sick person can go to a doctor and still not get healed. Doctors cannot perform miracles. But many superstitious individuals who could be healed go to a medical doctor only when it is too late. They try spiritistic healing methods first, and when these fail they go to a doctor as a last resort. Many die unnecessarily.

Others face untimely death because of ignorance. They do not recognize symptoms and do not know what practical steps to take to prevent sickness. Knowledge helps to prevent unnecessary suffering. It is noteworthy that literate mothers lose fewer children to sickness than do illiterate ones. Yes, ignorance can be fatal.

Negligence is another cause of illness. For example, many get sick because they allow insects to crawl over food before it is eaten or because the ones preparing the food do

not wash their hands beforehand. Sleeping without a mosquito net in malaria-infected regions is also dangerous.* In matters of health, it is often true that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

An unwise life-style has caused millions to get sick and die prematurely. Drunkenness, sexual immorality, misuse of drugs, and use of tobacco have ruined the health of many. If a person indulges in these vices and then falls sick, is it because someone put a spell on him or a spirit attacked him? No. He is to blame for his sickness. Blaming the spirits would be a refusal to accept responsibility for an unwise life-style.

Of course, some things we cannot control. For example, we could be exposed to sickness-causing microbes or to pollution. This is what happened to Owmadji. Her mother did not know what was causing the diarrhea. Her children are not sick as often as other children because she keeps her house and yard clean and always washes her hands before preparing food. But all children get sick once in a while. Some 25 different organic infections can cause diarrhea. Chances are, no one will ever know which one caused Owmadji's problem.

The Long-Term Solution

Sickness is not God's fault. “With evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone.” (James 1:13) If one of his worshipers gets sick, Jehovah sustains him spiritually. “Jehovah himself will sustain him upon a divan of illness; all his bed you will certainly change during his sickness.” (Psalm 41:3) Yes, God has compassion. He wants to help us, not hurt us.

Indeed, Jehovah has a long-term solution for sickness—Jesus' death and resurrection. By means of Jesus' ransom sacri-

* Nearly half a billion persons are infected with malaria. About two million per year die from the disease, mostly in Africa.

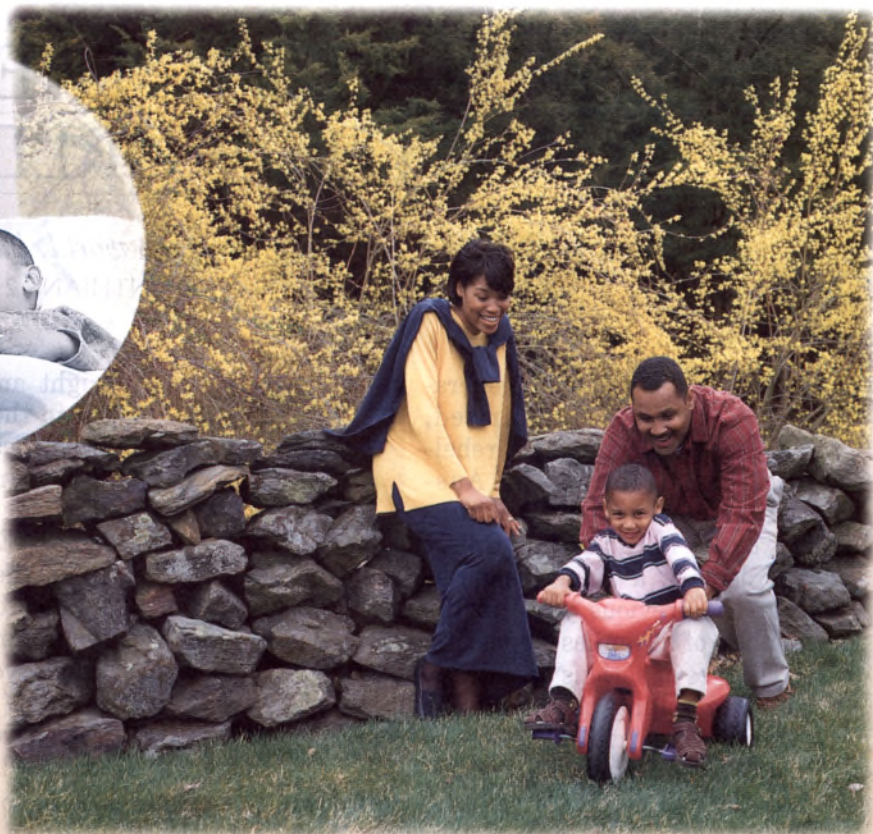


**Jehovah has
arranged a permanent
solution to the
problem of sickness**

fice, righthearted ones are redeemed from their sinful condition and will eventually have access to perfect health and eternal life in a paradise earth. (Matthew 5:5; John 3:16) Jesus' miracles were a preview of the true healing that God's Kingdom will bring. God will also remove Satan and his demons. (Romans 16:20) Indeed, Jehovah has wonderful things in store for those who exercise faith in him. We just need to be patient and endure.

In the meantime, God dispenses practical wisdom and spiritual direction by means of the Bible and the worldwide brotherhood of faithful worshipers. He shows us how to avoid the vices that cause health problems. And he provides us with true friends who will help when problems arise.

Think again of Job. Going to a witch doctor would have been the worst thing Job could have done! It would have deprived him



of God's protection, and he would have lost out on all the blessings that awaited him after his ordeal. God did not forget Job, and he will not forget us. "You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave," says the disciple James. (James 5:11) If we never give up, we too will receive wonderful blessings in God's due time.

What happened to little Owmadji? Her mother remembered an article in *The Watchtower's* companion magazine, *Awake!*, about oral rehydration therapy.* She followed its instructions and prepared the solution for Owmadji to drink. Now the little girl is fine and healthy.

* See *Awake!* of September 22, 1985, pages 24-5, "A Salty Drink That Saves Lives!"

YOUTHS—RESIST THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

“Now we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God.”—1 CORINTHIANS 2:12.

“OUR younger generation is dispirited, rejected and rebelling.” So declared the Australian newspaper *The Sun-Herald*. It added: “Court records show a 22 per cent rise [over the previous year] in the number of juveniles appearing on charges of serious assault . . . Kids are killing themselves at a rate that’s tripled since the mid-60s . . . And the generation gap has become a veritable gulf down which young people are sliding in ever-increasing numbers into a drug, alcohol and self-annihilation oblivion.” This situation is hardly limited to one land, however. Throughout the world, parents, teachers, and mental-health professionals lament the state of young ones.

² What a dramatic contrast there is between most of today’s youths and the wholesome young ones found in congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses! Not that they are perfect. They too have their struggles with “the desires incidental to youth.” (2 Timothy 2:22) But as a group, these young ones have taken a courageous stand for what is

1, 2. (a) What contrast can be seen between the young people in the world and the young ones in congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses? (b) What warm commendation can be given to most Witness youths?



right and have refused to give in to the world’s pressures. We wholeheartedly commend all of you young ones who are winning the war against Satan’s “crafty acts”! (Ephesians 6:11, footnote) Like the apostle John, we are moved to comment: “I write you, young men [and women], because you are strong and the word of God remains in you and you have conquered the wicked one.”—1 John 2:14.

³ Nevertheless, to continue winning your battle against the wicked one, you must strenuously resist what the Bible calls “the spirit of the world.” (1 Corinthians 2:12) According to one authority on Greek, “spirit” can mean “the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one.” For example, if you observe that someone is ill-tempered, you might say that he has a bad “spirit.” Your “spirit,” disposition, or mental inclination influences the choices you make; it drives your actions and speech. Interestingly, both individuals and groups can manifest a “spirit.” The apostle Paul wrote to a group of Christians: “The undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the spirit you people show.” (Philemon 25) Just what spirit, then, does this world manifest? Since “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one,” Satan

3. What can the word “spirit” mean?

**Many youths show by their conduct
that they are under the "authority"
of the world's spirit**

the Devil, the spirit of the world cannot possibly be wholesome, can it?—1 John 5:19.

Identifying the World's Spirit

⁴ Paul wrote: "It is you God made alive though you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you at one time walked according to the system of things of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience. Yes, among them we all at one time conducted ourselves in harmony with the desires of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and the thoughts, and we were naturally children of wrath even as the rest."—Ephesians 2:1-3.

⁵ Before learning the Christian way, Christians in Ephesus had been unwitting followers of "the ruler of the authority of the air," Satan the Devil. That "air" is not some literal place where Satan and his demons dwell. When Paul wrote these words, Satan the Devil and his demons still had access to heaven. (Compare Job 1:6; Revelation 12:7-12.) The word "air" means the spirit, or mental attitude, that dominates Satan's world. (Compare Revelation 16:17-21.) Like the air around us, this spirit is everywhere.

⁶ But what is "the authority of the air"? Evidently, this refers to the profound influence this "air" has on people. Paul said that this spirit "operates in the sons of disobedience." So the spirit of the world breeds a spirit of disobedience and rebel-

4, 5. (a) What spirit had influenced those in the Ephesian congregation before they became Christians? (b) Who is "the ruler of the authority of the air," and what is the "air"?

6. What is "the authority of the air," and how is it exercised over many young ones?



lion, and peer pressure is one way in which this authority is exercised. "When you're in school," says a young Witness girl, "everyone's always encouraging you to be a little rebellious. The kids respect you more if you do something on the edge."

Manifestations of the World's Spirit

⁷ What are some manifestations of the spirit of the world among young people today? Dishonesty and rebelliousness. One magazine report stated that more than 70 percent of college juniors and seniors said that they had cheated during high school. Flippant, sarcastic, and unclean speech are also prevalent. True, on occasion Job and the apostle Paul used what some might view as sarcasm to express righteous indignation. (Job 12:2; 2 Corinthians 12:13) However, the cruel sarcasm heard on the lips of many young people often amounts to verbal abuse.

⁸ Excesses in recreation are also manifestations of the world's spirit. Youth

7-9. (a) Name some ways in which the world's spirit is manifested among young people today. (b) Have you observed any of these things locally?



Be selective in your choice of music

tation of this world's unclean spirit is sexual immorality. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Reports *The New York Times*: "Sex for many teenagers has become almost a rite of passage . . . More than two-thirds of high school seniors have had sexual intercourse." An article in *The Wall Street Journal* cited evidence that children between the ages of 8 and 12 are "becoming more sexually active." Says a recently retired school counselor: "We're beginning to see a few pregnant sixth-graders."*

Rejecting the World's Spirit

¹⁰ Tragically, some Christian youths have succumbed to the world's spirit. "I displayed a fine attitude in front of my parents and fellow Christians," admits one Japanese girl. "But I was also living another life." Says a youth from Kenya: "For some time I lived a double life, which included parties, rock music, and having the wrong friends. I knew this was wrong, but I tried to ignore it, hoping that in time it would just go away. But it didn't. Things just got worse." Another youth, from Germany, says: "It all started with having the wrong kind of friends. Then I took up smoking. I wanted to hurt my parents, but I only hurt myself."

¹¹ Still, it is possible to resist, yes reject, the world's spirit. Consider the ancient example of Caleb. When the ten cowardly spies brought back a bad report about the Promised Land, he, along with Joshua, refused to be intimidated and go along with the crowd.

* Children about 11 years old.

10. How have some youths from Christian families succumbed to the world's spirit?

11. How was Caleb able to resist going along with the crowd when ten spies brought back a bad report?

nightclubs, raves,* and other forms of wild reveling are popular among young people. Extremes in dress and grooming are likewise prevalent. From oversized hip-hop styles to shocking fads, such as body-piercing, many of today's youths identify themselves with the world's rebellious spirit. (Compare Romans 6:16.) Preoccupation with material possessions is another manifestation. According to one educational journal, "marketers are pummeling kids at every turn with a formidable arsenal of techniques and a panoply [an array] of products." By the time youths in the United States graduate from high school, they will have been exposed to 360,000 TV ads. Your peers may also pressure you to buy. Says a 14-year-old girl: "Everyone is always asking, 'What brand is your sweater, jacket, or jeans?'"

⁹ Since Bible times, unwholesome music has been a tool of Satan to stimulate unclean behavior. (Compare Exodus 32:17-19; Psalm 69:12; Isaiah 23:16.) Not surprisingly, then, music with sexually seductive—if not explicit—lyrics, profanity, and wild, arousing tempos is popular. Yet another manifes-

* Dance parties usually lasting all night. For more information see "Young People Ask . . . Are Raves Harmless Fun?" in the December 22, 1997, issue of *Awake!*

They courageously declared: "The land that we passed through to spy it out is a very, very good land. If Jehovah has found delight in us, then he will certainly bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that is flowing with milk and honey." (Numbers 14:7, 8) What enabled Caleb to stand up to all that pressure? Jehovah said of Caleb: "A different spirit has proved to be with him."—Numbers 14:24.

Showing "a Different Spirit"

¹² Today, it takes courage and strength to show "a different spirit," or mental attitude—one different from the world's. One way you can do so is by avoiding sarcastic, disrespectful speech. Interestingly, the English word "sarcasm" is derived from a Greek verb that literally means "to tear flesh like dogs." (Compare Galatians 5:15.) Just as a dog's teeth can tear flesh off a bone, sarcastic "humor" can strip others of their dignity. But Colossians 3:8 exhorts you to "put them all away from you, wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech, and obscene talk out of your mouth." And Proverbs 10:19 states: "In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly." If someone insults you, have the self-control to 'turn the other cheek,' perhaps calmly and peacefully speaking to the abuser in private.—Matthew 5:39; Proverbs 15:1.

¹³ Another way to show "a different spirit" is to maintain a balanced view of material things. Of course, it is only natural to want to have nice things. Jesus Christ himself evidently owned at least one quality gar-

12. Why is it important to show "a different spirit" with regard to one's speech?

13. How can youths show a balanced view of material things?



ment. (John 19:23, 24) However, when owning things becomes an obsession and you are constantly begging your parents to buy things they really cannot afford, or when you just want to imitate other youths, then the world's spirit may have more authority over you than you realize. The Bible says: "Everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world." Yes, do not give in to the authority of the world's materialistic spirit! Learn to be content with what you have.—1 John 2:16; 1 Timothy 6:8-10.

¹⁴ Keeping recreation in its place is also important. The prophet Isaiah declared: "Woe to those who are getting up early in the morning that they may seek just intoxicating liquor, who are lingering till late in the evening darkness so that wine itself inflames them! And there must prove to be harp and stringed instrument, tambourine and flute, and wine at their feasts; but the activity of Jehovah they do not look at, and

14. (a) How did God's people in Isaiah's day show an unbalanced view of recreation? (b) What dangers have some Christian youths encountered at nightclubs and wild parties?

the work of his hands they have not seen.” (Isaiah 5:11, 12) Sad to say, some Christian youths have engaged in similar wild partying. When a group of Christian youths were asked to describe what goes on at youth nightclubs, one young sister said: “Fights happen all the time. I’ve found myself in the middle of them.” Added a young brother: “Drinking, smoking, things like that.” Another young brother admitted: “People get drunk. They act like idiots! And there are drugs. A lot of bad things happen. If you go there and think you won’t be affected, you’re wrong.” For good reason, then, the Bible lists revelries, or “wild parties,” as one of the “works of the flesh.”—Galatians 5:19-21; *Byington*; Romans 13:13.

¹⁵ Avoiding harmful recreation will not condemn you to a joyless life. We worship a “happy God,” who wants you to enjoy your youth! (1 Timothy 1:11; Ecclesiastes 11:9) But the Bible warns: “He that is loving merriment [“entertainment,” *Lamsa*] will be an individual in want.” (Proverbs 21:17) Yes, if you make recreation the most important thing in your life, you will suffer spiritual want. So follow Bible principles in your choice of recreation. There are many ways to enjoy yourself that will build you up and not tear you down.*—Ecclesiastes 11:10.

¹⁶ Showing modesty in your dress and grooming, rejecting the world’s fads, will also mark you as different. (Romans 12:2; 1 Timothy 2:9) So will being selective in your choice of music. (Philippians 4:8, 9) “I have music that I know I’m supposed to throw out,” confesses one young Christian, “but it

* For suggestions, see pages 296-303 of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*.

15. What balanced view of recreation does the Bible give?

16. How can Christian youths show that they are different?

sounds so good!” Another young man similarly admitted: “For me music is a pitfall because I love it. If I find out something is wrong with it, or if my parents call it to my attention, I really have to force my mind to take command over my heart because in my heart I love that music.” Youths, do not be “ignorant of [Satan’s] designs”! (2 Corinthians 2:11) He is using music in an effort to turn young Christians away from Jehovah! Articles have appeared in Watch Tower publications discussing rap, heavy metal, and alternative rock music.* However, Watch Tower publications cannot possibly comment on every new form and style of music that might come along. You must, therefore, use “thinking ability” and “discernment” when you select music.—Proverbs 2:11.

¹⁷ Finally, you must keep yourself morally clean. The Bible urges: “Flee from fornication.” (1 Corinthians 6:18) The original

* See the April 15, 1993, issue of *The Watchtower*.

17. (a) What is *por-nei’a*, and what acts does it include? (b) What is God’s will when it comes to matters of morality?

Questions for Review

- ☐ What is “the spirit of the world,” and how does it have “authority” over people?
- ☐ What are some manifestations of the world’s spirit among youths today?
- ☐ How can Christian youths show “a different spirit” in regard to speech and recreation?
- ☐ How can Christian youths show “a different spirit” in regard to morals and music?

Greek word for fornication, *por-nei'a*, refers to all illicit sexual activity involving the use of the genital organs carried on outside the bonds of marriage. That would include oral sex and the deliberate fondling of sexual organs. A number of Christian youths have engaged in such behavior, imagining that they really were not committing fornication. However, God's Word clearly says: "This is what God wills, the sanctifying of you, that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you should know how to get possession of

his own vessel in sanctification and honor."
—1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4.

¹⁸ Yes, with Jehovah's help, you can avoid being contaminated by the world's spirit! (1 Peter 5:10) Nevertheless, Satan often camouflages his lethal traps, and it can sometimes take real discernment to sense danger. Our next article is designed to help youths develop their perceptive powers.

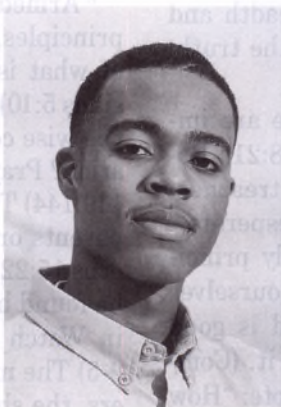
18. (a) How can a youth avoid being contaminated by the world's spirit? (b) What will be discussed in the next article?

YOUTHS—TRAIN YOUR PERCEPTIVE POWERS!

"Solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong."—HEBREWS 5:14.

"KEEP strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, buying out the opportune time for yourselves, because the days are wicked." (Ephesians 5:15, 16) Since the apostle Paul penned those words two thousand years ago, 'wicked men and impostors have advanced from bad to worse.' We live in "critical times hard to deal with," or as another translation puts it, times that are "full of danger."—2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13; *Phillips*.

1, 2. (a) How does our situation today compare to that of ancient Christians in Ephesus? (b) What abilities can protect you from danger, and how can you develop them?



² You can avoid being harmed by the dangers that may lurk in your path, however, by developing "shrewdness, . . . knowledge and thinking ability." (Proverbs 1:4) Says Proverbs 2:10-12: "When wisdom enters into your heart and knowledge itself becomes pleasant to your very soul, thinking ability itself will keep guard over you, discernment itself will safeguard you, to deliver you from the bad way, from the man speaking perverse things." But just how can you develop those abilities? Says Hebrews 5:14: "Solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." As with any

skill, mastering the use of one's perceptive powers requires training. The Greek word Paul used literally means 'having been trained like a gymnast.' How do you begin such training?

Training Your Perceptive Powers

³ Note that your perceptive powers—your ability to discern right from wrong—are trained “through use.” When you must make a decision, guessing, acting on impulse, or simply following the crowd will rarely result in a wise choice. To make wise decisions, you must use your perceptive powers. How? First of all, by thoroughly investigating the situation and getting all the facts. Ask questions if necessary. Determine what your options are. Proverbs 13:16 says: “Everyone shrewd will act with knowledge.” Next, try to determine which Bible laws or principles bear on the subject. (Proverbs 3:5) To do this, of course, you must have a knowledge of the Bible. That is why Paul encourages us to take in “solid food”—to learn “the breadth and length and height and depth” of the truth.—Ephesians 3:18.

⁴ Doing so is essential, since we are imperfect, prone to sin. (Genesis 8:21; Romans 5:12) “The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate,” says Jeremiah 17:9. Without godly principles to guide us, we can deceive ourselves into thinking that something bad is good—simply because our flesh craves it. (Compare Isaiah 5:20.) The psalmist wrote: “How will a young man cleanse his path? By keeping on guard according to your word. Owing to your orders I behave with understanding.

3. How can you use your perceptive powers when called upon to make a decision?

4. Why is a knowledge of God's principles essential?

That is why I have hated every false path.” —Psalm 119:9, 104.

⁵ Why have some youths who were raised in Christian households followed false paths? Could it be that such ones have never ‘*proved to themselves* the good and acceptable and perfect will of God’? (Romans 12:2) Some may attend meetings with their parents and be able to recite some of the basic teachings of the Bible. But when asked to give proof of their beliefs or to explain some of the deeper things of God's Word, their knowledge proves to be disappointingly shallow. Such youths can easily be misled. (Ephesians 4:14) If this is true of you, why not resolve to make changes? One young sister recalls: “I did research. I asked myself, ‘How do I know that this is the right religion? How do I know that there is a God named Jehovah?’”^{*} Carefully examining the Scriptures convinced her that the things she had learned from her parents were really so!—Compare Acts 17:11.

⁶ Armed with a knowledge of Jehovah's principles, you will more easily make “sure of what is acceptable to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:10) Yet what if you are not certain of the wise course to take in a particular situation? Pray to Jehovah for direction. (Psalm 119:144) Try talking matters over with your parents or with a mature Christian. (Proverbs 15:22; 27:17) Helpful direction can also be found by doing research in the Bible and in Watch Tower publications. (Proverbs 2:3-5) The more you use your perceptive powers, the sharper they will become.

^{*} See the article “Young People Ask . . . How Can I Make the Truth My Own?” in the October 22, 1998, issue of *Awake!*

5. (a) Why do some youths follow false paths? (b) How did one youth make the truth her own?

6. How can you make “sure of what is acceptable to the Lord,” Jehovah?

Showing Discernment in Recreation

⁷ Let us now look at how you might use your perceptive powers in some specific situations. Imagine, for example, that you have been invited to a gathering. You might even have received a printed flier advertising the get-together. You are told that a large number of Witness youths will be there. But a fee to cover expenses will be charged. Should you attend?



Learning to do research will help you train your perceptive powers

⁸ Well, use your perceptive powers. First, get the facts. How large will this gathering be? Who will be there? When will it begin? When will it end? What activities are planned? How will it be supervised? Next, do some research, looking up “Social Gatherings,” and “Entertainment” in the *Watch Tower Publications Index*.^{*} What might your research reveal? For one thing, that Jehovah does not condemn getting together to have a good time. In fact, Ecclesiastes 8:15 says that along with working hard, “mankind have nothing better under the sun than to eat and drink and rejoice.” Why, Jesus Christ himself attended special meals and at least one wedding. (Luke 5:27-29; John 2:1-10) Kept in balance, socializing can be beneficial.

^{*} The article “Social Entertainment—Enjoy the Benefits, Avoid the Snares” appearing in the August 15, 1992, issue of *The Watchtower* has a wealth of information on this subject.

7, 8. (a) How can you use your perceptive powers in determining whether to attend a gathering or not? (b) What is the Bible’s view of recreation?

⁹ Nevertheless, badly organized gatherings may spell trouble. At 1 Corinthians 10:8, we read of how unwise associations led to fornication and the execution of “twenty-three thousand [unfaithful Israelites] in one day.” Another sobering warning is found at Romans 13:13: “As in the daytime let us walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts, not in illicit intercourse and loose conduct, not in strife and jealousy.”

(Compare 1 Peter 4:3.) True, no fixed number can be set for how many can attend a gathering. But experience shows that the larger a gathering is, the harder it is to supervise it. Smaller, well-managed gatherings are less likely to turn into “wild parties.”—Galatians 5:21, *Byington*.

¹⁰ Your research will no doubt spark further questions, such as: Will some mature adult Christians be at the gathering? Indeed, who is sponsoring it? Is the purpose of the gathering to promote wholesome association or to make a profit for someone? Are there any restrictions as to who can attend? If the gathering is during the weekend, will it end at a reasonable time so that those attending can share in the Christian ministry the next day? If there is to be music and dancing, will it be consistent with Christian standards? (2 Corinthians 6:3) Asking such questions may not be easy. But Proverbs 22:3 warns: “Shrewd is the one that has

9, 10. (a) What dangers may some gatherings present? (b) What questions might you ask yourself before deciding whether to attend a gathering or not?



**Smaller gatherings
are easier to oversee
and less likely to turn into
uncontrolled revelries**

**Parents should assist
their children in planning
their education**



seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself, but the inexperienced have passed along and must suffer the penalty." Yes, you can avoid risky situations by using your perceptive powers.

Discernment in Planning Your Education

¹¹ The Bible says that it is wise to plan for the future. (Proverbs 21:5) Have you and your parents discussed *your* future? Perhaps you plan to enter the full-time ministry as a pioneer. Really, no career choice could bring greater satisfaction. If you are cultivating good study habits and developing skills in the ministry, you are preparing for this exciting career. Have you thought about how you will support yourself in the ministry? If, in the future, you choose to raise a family, will you be able to care for that added responsibility? Making balanced, realistic decisions about such things requires the use of perceptive powers.

11. How can youths use their perceptive powers in planning their future?

¹² In some places it is still possible to get on-the-job training in a useful skill or profession. There are youths who learn the family business or receive training from adult friends who have businesses. Others take courses at school that will be useful in earning a living later. Where such opportunities are not available, after careful thought parents may arrange for their children to receive some supplementary education after high school. Planning ahead in this way so as to care for adult responsibilities and especially so as to be able to share in the pioneer service over the long term is not incompatible with putting God's Kingdom first. (Matthew 6:33) And supplemen-

12. (a) How have some families chosen to adapt to the changing economic situation? (b) Is obtaining some supplementary education necessarily at odds with having pioneering as a goal? Explain.



Dating in a group setting is a protection

tary education does not rule out pioneering. One young Witness, for example, had wanted to pioneer for a long time. After she finished high school, her parents—regular pioneers themselves—arranged for her to have some supplementary education. She was able to pioneer while she received her schooling, and now she has a skill with which she supports herself as she continues pioneering.

¹³ In the matter of supplementary education, each family has the right and responsibility to make its own decision. When such education is well chosen, it can be helpful. It can, though, be a trap. If you are considering such education, what is your goal? Is it to prepare yourself to handle adult responsibilities in an honorable way? Or are you “seeking great things for yourself”? (Jeremiah 45:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8; 6:9) What about pursuing supplementary education away from home, perhaps living on a campus? Would that be wise

13. How should families count the cost of supplementary education?

in view of Paul’s warning that “bad associations spoil useful habits”? (1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Timothy 2:22) Remember, too, that “the time left is reduced.” (1 Corinthians 7:29) How much time will you devote to such education? Will it consume the bulk of your youthful years? If so, how will you apply the Bible’s encouragement to “remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood”? (Ecclesiastes 12:1) Further, will the courses you take allow time for such vital Christian activities as meeting attendance, field service, and personal study? (Matthew 24:14; Hebrews 10:24, 25) If your perceptive powers are keen, you will never lose sight of spiritual goals as you and your parents plan for your future.

Keeping Courtship Honorable

¹⁴ Another area in which your perceptive powers are needed is that of courtship. It is only natural to want to show affection to someone you care about. The chaste couple in the Song of Solomon evidently exchanged *some* displays of affection before they married. (Song of Solomon 1:2; 2:6; 8:5) Today, some courting couples may likewise feel that holding hands, kissing, and embracing are appropriate, especially when marriage seems imminent. But remember: “He that is trusting in his own heart is stupid.” (Proverbs 28:26) Tragically, a number of couples have shown bad judgment by putting themselves into compromising circumstances. Displays of affection have become intense and uncontrolled; unclean acts have

14. (a) What principles should guide courting couples as they show affection for each other? (b) How have some couples shown poor judgment in this regard?

resulted and have even escalated to sexual immorality.

¹⁵ If you are dating, you are wise to avoid being alone with your prospective mate under inappropriate circumstances. So it may be best to enjoy each other's association in a group setting or in public places. Some couples arrange to have a chaperon. Also, consider the words of Hosea 4:11: "Wine and sweet wine are what take away good motive." Alcohol can impair good judgment and lead a couple to act in a way that they will later regret.

¹⁶ Proverbs 13:10 says: "By presumptuousness one only causes a struggle, but with those consulting together there is wisdom." Yes, 'consult together' and discuss how you will conduct yourselves. Place limits on displays of affection, each respecting the other's feelings and conscience. (1 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; 1 Peter 3:16) Talking about this sensitive subject may be difficult at first, but it can prevent serious problems from developing later on.

Being Taught 'From Youth On'

¹⁷ Avoiding Satan's snares will require constant vigilance on your part—and sometimes, great courage. Why, at times you may find yourself at odds, not simply with your peers, but with the whole world. The psalmist David prayed: "You are my hope, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah, my confidence from my youth. O God, you have taught me from my youth on, and until now I keep telling about your wonderful works." (Psalm 71:5, 17)* David is known for his courage.

* Psalm 71 appears to be a continuation of Psalm 70, which is identified in the superscription as a psalm of David.

15, 16. What reasonable precautions can couples take to make sure that their courtship will remain honorable?

17. How did David make Jehovah 'his confidence from his youth on,' and what lesson is there in this for youths today?

But when did he develop it? As a youth! Even before his famed confrontation with Goliath, David had shown extraordinary courage in protecting his father's flocks—killing both a lion and a bear. (1 Samuel 17:34-37) However, David gave Jehovah full credit for whatever bravery he displayed, calling him "my confidence from my youth." David's ability to lean on Jehovah made him equal to any trial that he faced. You too will find that if you lean upon Jehovah, he will give you the courage and strength to 'conquer the world.'—1 John 5:4.

¹⁸ Thousands of young ones like you have taken a courageous stand and now serve as baptized publishers of the good news. We thank God for the faith and courage of you young ones! Remain determined to escape the world's corruption. (2 Peter 1:4) Keep using your Bible-trained perceptive powers. Doing so will protect you from calamity now and will ultimately make your salvation sure. Indeed, as our final article will show, you will make your life successful.

18. What exhortation is given to godly youths today?

Questions for Review

- ☐ How does a youth train his perceptive powers?
- ☐ How can a youth use his perceptive powers when it comes to attending Christian gatherings?
- ☐ What factors may be considered in planning one's education?
- ☐ How can couples who are courting avoid the snare of sexual immorality?

MAKE YOUR LIFE SUCCESSFUL!

"Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones . . . Everything he does will succeed."—PSALM 1:1, 3.

SUCCESS—what does that word mean to you? "My most important goal is to be a business success," said a young man. A young woman said: "My main dream is to have a happy family." But says another young woman: "My dream is just to have a nice condo, a nice car . . . I'm out for myself." The problem is that neither money, nor family, nor even a lucrative career is the measure of true success. At Psalm 1:1-3, we read: "Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones . . . His delight is in the law of Jehovah . . . Everything he does will succeed."

² Here the Bible promises something no human can offer—genuine success! But it is not talking about financial gain. The Bible itself warns: "The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things." (1 Timothy 6:10) Real success is found in pleasing God—including following the



law of Jehovah. Only this can bring real satisfaction and genuine happiness! Perhaps the idea of being under Jehovah's law and being told what to do does not sound appealing. Yet, Jesus said: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) Whether you realize it or not, you were created with spiritual needs—including a

deep-seated need to know God and to understand his purposes. Therefore, you can experience true happiness only if you fill those needs and follow "the law of Jehovah."

Why We Need God's Laws

³ The prophet Jeremiah wrote: "I well know, O Jehovah, that to earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." (Jeremiah 10:23) This is true of all humans, young and old. Not only do we lack the wisdom, experience, and knowledge to direct our own steps; we simply do not have the *right* to do so. At Revelation 4:11, the

1. (a) How do many youths in the world view success? (b) How does the Bible describe a successful person?

2. Where is real success found, and what is the only way to attain it?

3. Why should we be happy to let Jehovah 'direct our steps'?

Because they lack a healthy "dread of God," many youths engage in destructive behavior

Bible says: "You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created." As our Creator, Jehovah is "the source of life." (Psalm 36:9) As such, he knows better than anyone else how we should use our lives. So he made laws, not to rob us of enjoyment, but to help us benefit ourselves. (Isaiah 48:17) Ignore God's law, and you doom yourself to failure.

⁴ For example, have you ever wondered why so many young people ruin their lives through drugs, promiscuity, and other vices? Psalm 36:1, 2 explains: "The utterance of transgression to the wicked one is in the midst of his heart; there is no dread of God in front of his eyes. For he has acted too smoothly to himself in his own eyes to find out his error so as to hate it." Because they lack a healthy "dread of God," many young ones fool themselves into believing that there are no consequences to risky behavior. Eventually, though, they have to face up to this unchanging principle: "Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap; because he who is sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh, but he who is sowing with a view to the spirit will reap everlasting life from the spirit."—Galatians 6:7, 8.

4. Why do so many young ones ruin their lives?



'Counting the Days'

⁵ How can you make your life a success and "reap everlasting life"? Moses wrote: "The days of our years are seventy years; and if because of special mightiness they are eighty years . . . It must quickly pass by, and away we fly." (Psalm 90:10) You may rarely, if ever, think about death. In fact, many youths behave as if they were indestructible. But Moses brings us face-to-face with the painful reality that life is short. There is not even a guarantee that we will live to be 70 or 80. "Time and unforeseen occurrence" can cut down even those who are young and healthy. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) How, then, will you use the precious life that you now enjoy? Moses prayed: "Show us just how to count our days in such a way that we may bring a heart of wisdom in." —Psalm 90:12.

⁶ What does it mean to count your days? It does not mean that you should become obsessed with how long you might live. Moses was praying that Jehovah teach His

5, 6. (a) Why should youths 'count their days,' and what does it mean to do so? (b) What does it mean to 'remember our Grand Creator'?

people how to *use* their remaining days in a way that brings honor to Him. Are you counting the days of your life—viewing each day as a precious resource to be used to bring praise to God? The Bible gives young people this encouragement: “Remove vexation from your heart, and ward off calamity from your flesh; for youth and the prime of life are vanity. Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood.” (Ecclesiastes 11:10-12:1) Remembering our Creator means more than just not forgetting that he exists. When the criminal implored Jesus, “Remember me when you get into your kingdom,” he wanted Jesus to do more than recall his name. He wanted Jesus to act, to resurrect him! (Luke 23:42; compare Genesis 40:14, 23; Job 14:13.) In a similar way, to remember Jehovah involves action, doing what pleases him. Can it be said that you are remembering Jehovah?

Avoid Envy-ing Wrongdoers

⁷ Many young ones choose to forget Jehovah because they feel that being a Witness is too restrictive. A brother in Spain recalls how he felt as a teenager: “I was attracted to the world because the truth seemed difficult and rigid. It meant sitting, studying, going to meetings, putting on a tie, and those were not things I enjoyed doing.” Do you sometimes feel that you are missing out because you serve God? Perhaps it will surprise you to know that one of the writers of the Bible experienced those very feelings. Please open your Bible and read Psalm 73.

⁸ Let us examine this psalm in some detail. Verses 2 and 3 say: “As for me, my feet had almost turned aside, my steps had nearly been made to slip. For I became en-

vious of the boasters, when I would see the very peace of wicked people.” According to the superscription, this psalm was written by Asaph. He was a Levite musician and a contemporary of King David. (1 Chronicles 25:1, 2; 2 Chronicles 29:30) Although he had the fine privilege of serving in God’s temple, he “became envious” of men who boasted about their lawlessness. Things appeared to go well for them; they apparently enjoyed peace and security. In fact, their seeming successes ‘exceeded the imaginations of their hearts.’ (Verses 5, 7) They would talk about their exploits “in an elevated style,” that is, in an arrogant manner. (Verse 8) ‘They would put their mouths in the heavens and their tongue would walk about in the earth,’ showing regard for no one—either in heaven or on earth.—Verse 9.

⁹ Perhaps the same can be said about your peers at school. You may hear them shamelessly boast of their sexual escapades, their wild parties, and their indulgence in alcohol and drugs. When you contrast their life of so-called pleasure with the narrow way you must walk as a Christian, you might sometimes feel “envious of the boasters.” (Matthew 7:13, 14) Asaph himself got to the point where he exclaimed: “Surely it is in vain that I have cleansed my heart and that I wash my hands in innocence itself. And I came to be plagued all day long.” (Verses 13, 14) Yes, he began to question the value of serving God and leading an upright life.

¹⁰ Fortunately, Asaph did not stay in this state of despair for long. He quickly came to realize that the seeming peace of the

9. How might some Christian youths today come to feel like Asaph?

10, 11. (a) What caused Asaph to have a change of heart? (b) How are wrongdoers “on slippery ground”? Give an example.

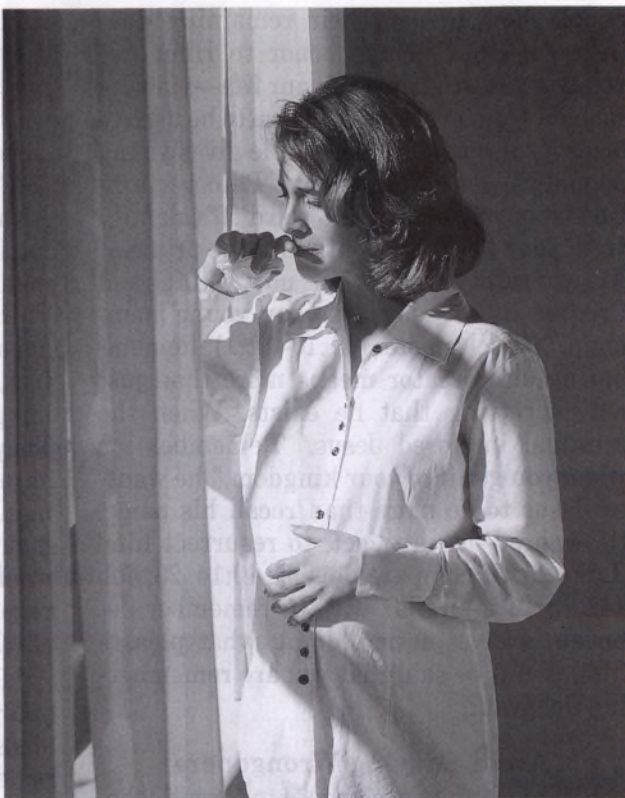
7. Why do some youths choose to forget their Creator? Give an example.

8. Why was Asaph “envious of the boasters”?

**Youths often forget
that their actions have
consequences**

wicked was nothing but an illusion—and a temporary one at that! He exclaimed: “Surely on slippery ground is where you place them. You have made them fall to ruins. O how they have become an object of astonishment as in a moment! How they have reached their end, have been brought to their finish through sudden terrors!” (Verses 18, 19) Many of your peers are likewise “on slippery ground.” Sooner or later their ungodly behavior will catch up with them, resulting perhaps in an unwanted pregnancy, a sexually transmitted disease, even imprisonment or death! Worse yet, they suffer alienation from God.—James 4:4.

¹¹ A young Witness in Spain observed this truth firsthand. As a youth, she led a double life, being deeply involved with a group of godless youths. Before long, she fell in love with one of them—a drug addict. Though she abstained from using drugs herself, she purchased drugs for him. “I even helped him insert the needle,” she admits. Fortunately, this sister was brought to her senses and restored to spiritual health. But how shocked she was to learn some time later that her drug-using boyfriend had died of AIDS. Yes, just as the psalmist said, godless people are “on slippery ground.” Some may die unexpectedly as a result of their loose life-style. As for the rest, unless they change their ways, they will in the near future face “the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not



know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.”—2 Thesalonians 1:7, 8.

¹² How foolish it is, then, to envy “those who do not know God”! Really, it is those who know Jehovah and who have the hope of living forever that are to be envied. A young brother in Japan came to that realization. As a youth, he too “wanted more freedom.” He explains: “I thought I was missing out on something. Then I realized what my life would be without the truth. I could see myself living 70 or 80 years and then dying. But Jehovah holds out the hope of everlasting life! Realizing this helped me to appreciate what I really had.” Even

12. How did a youth in Japan come to see the folly of envying wrongdoers?



**Cultivate
a love of Bible reading**

**You will enjoy the meetings
more if you participate**



so, remaining faithful when surrounded by people who do not follow God's laws is anything but easy. What are some things you can do to resist those pressures?

Watch Your Associations!

¹³ Let us look again at the description of the successful man, recorded at Psalm 1: 1-3: "Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones, and in the way of sinners has not stood, and in the seat of ridiculers has not sat. But his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night. And he will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed."

¹⁴ Notice first of all that your associations play a big part. Proverbs 13:20 says: "He

that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." This does not mean being cold, unfriendly, or rude to youths who are not Jehovah's Witnesses. The Bible urges us to love our neighbors and to "be peaceable with all men." (Romans 12:18; Matthew 22:39) However, you may find yourself 'walking in the counsel' of those who do not follow Bible standards if you associate too closely with them.

The Benefits of Bible Reading

¹⁵ The psalmist also observed that the successful man takes delight in reading God's law "in an undertone day and night." (Psalm 1:1, 2) Granted, the Bible is not light reading, and in it are "some things hard to understand." (2 Peter 3:16) But Bible

13, 14. Why is it important to be selective when it comes to associations?

15. How can youths cultivate a longing for Bible reading?

reading need not be drudgery. It is possible to “form a longing for the unadulterated milk” of God’s Word. (1 Peter 2:2) Try reading just a little each day. If there are points that you do not understand, do some research. Afterward, think about what you have read. (Psalm 77:11, 12) If you have trouble concentrating, try reading out loud “in an undertone.” In time, your love of Bible reading is sure to grow. One young sister in Brazil recalls: “Jehovah always seemed distant to me. But for some months now, I have been improving my personal study and Bible reading. Now I feel that my relationship with Jehovah is stronger. He is more real to me.”

¹⁶ Attending congregation meetings is also vital to your spiritual growth. If you “pay attention to how you listen,” you can receive much encouragement. (Luke 8:18) Do you sometimes feel that the meetings are not very interesting? Well, ask yourself, ‘What do I do to make the meetings interesting? Do I pay attention? Do I prepare? Do I offer comments?’ After all, the Bible tells us to “consider one another to incite to love and fine works, . . . encouraging one another.” (Hebrews 10:24, 25) To do this you must participate! Of course, to participate you must study in advance. A young sister admits: “It really is easier to participate in the meetings when you prepare.”

Following God’s Way Leads to Success

¹⁷ The psalmist further describes the successful man as being “like a tree planted by streams of water.” The streams of water may have referred to irrigation ditches that were used to water trees in orchards. (Isa-

16. How can we get more out of congregation meetings?

17. How is a diligent reader of the Bible “like a tree planted by streams of water”?

iah 44:4) Daily reading of the Bible is like being attached to such an unfailing source of sustenance and refreshment. (Jeremiah 17:8) You will daily receive the strength you need to bear up under trials and difficulties. Having learned Jehovah’s thinking, you will have the wisdom you need to make wise decisions.

¹⁸ At times, serving Jehovah may seem difficult. But never feel that it is too difficult to handle. (Deuteronomy 30:11) The Bible promises you that ‘everything you do will succeed’ in the long run, as long as your main objective is to please Jehovah and make his heart rejoice! (Proverbs 27:11) And remember, you do not have to go it alone. You have the support of Jehovah and Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5) They know the pressures you face, and they will never abandon you. (Psalm 55:22) You also have the backing of “the whole association of brothers” and of your parents if they are God fearing. (1 Peter 2:17) With such backing, along with your determination and effort, you can enjoy a successful life not only now but eternally!

18. What can ensure a young person’s success in serving Jehovah?

Questions for Review

- ☐ What is real success?
- ☐ Why do we need Jehovah to direct our steps?
- ☐ How can youths ‘count their days’?
- ☐ Why is it foolish to envy wrongdoers?
- ☐ How can daily Bible reading and regular meeting attendance help youths enjoy a successful life?



JEHOVAH HAS BEEN MY CRAG

AS TOLD BY EMMANUEL LIONOUDAKIS

My mother scowled and said to me: “If you stick with your decision, then you will have to leave this home.” I had decided to preach God’s Kingdom full-time. My family, however, could not bear the humiliation brought upon them by my repeated arrests.

MY PARENTS were humble and God-fearing. They lived in the village of Douliana, in the western part of the Greek island of Crete, where I was born in the year 1908. From my youth onward, they taught me to fear and respect God. I loved God’s Word, although I had never seen a Bible in the hands of teachers or Greek Orthodox priests.

After a neighbor had read six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*, by C. T. Russell, and the book *The Harp of God*, he enthusiastically shared with me their eye-opening Scriptural contents. Those books were published by the Bible Students, as Jehovah’s Witnesses were then called. I gladly obtained a Bible and copies of books from the Watch Tower Society’s office in Athens. I can still remember staying up late at night with that neighbor, praying to Jehovah and by

candlelight drinking deeply from the Scriptures with the help of those publications.

I was 20 years old and serving as a schoolteacher in a nearby village when I started sharing my newly found Bible knowledge with others. Soon, four of us were holding regular meetings for Bible study in Douliana. We also distributed tracts, booklets, books, and Bibles in order to help other people learn about the only hope for mankind, the Kingdom of God.

In 1931 we were among the thousands worldwide who adopted the Bible-based name Jehovah’s Witnesses. (Isaiah 43:10) During the following year, we participated in an information campaign, explaining to the authorities our new name and its significance. This included distributing a pertinent booklet to every priest, judge, police officer, and businessman in our area.

As expected, the clergy instigated a wave of persecution. The first time that I was arrested, I was sentenced to 20 days in prison. Soon after being released, I was arrested again and sentenced to one month of imprisonment. When a judge demanded that we stop preaching, we replied with the words of Acts 5:29: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." Later, in 1932, a Watch Tower representative visited our small group in Douliana, and all four of us got baptized.

Finding a Spiritual Family

Because of my desire to do more in the preaching work, I resigned from my teaching position. That was too much for my mother. She demanded that I leave home. With the approval of the Watch Tower branch office in Athens, a generous Christian brother in the city of Iráklion, Crete, gladly received me into his house. So in August 1933, the brothers from my home village, along with some interested individuals, came down to the bus stop to bid me farewell. This was a very touching moment, and we all cried, since we were unsure when we would see one another again.

In Iráklion, I became part of a loving spiritual family. There were three other Christian brothers and one sister with whom we met regularly for study and worship. I could see firsthand the fulfillment of Jesus' promise: "No one has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not get a hundredfold now in this period of time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers." (Mark 10:29, 30) My

assignment was to preach in that city and in the nearby villages. After I covered the city, I moved on to work in the departments of Iráklion and Lasithion.

A Lone Pioneer

I spent many hours trudging from village to village. Moreover, I had to carry several pounds of printed matter, since shipments of literature were infrequent. Because I had



Below: With my wife; left: in 1927; opposite page: with Minos Kokkinakis (left) and another Witness at the Acropolis, 1939, soon after return from exile





nowhere to sleep, I would go into a coffee-house in the village, wait till the last patron left—usually after midnight—sleep on a couch, and get up very early the next morning before the owner started serving beverages. An untold number of fleas shared those couches with me.

Although the response of people was usually icy, I was happy to give Jehovah my youthful vigor. When I found a person who was interested in Bible truth, it renewed my determination to continue with this lifesaving ministry. Association with my spiritual brothers was also refreshing. I used to meet them after being absent for 20 to 50 days, depending on how far from the city of Iráklion I was preaching.

I still vividly remember how lonely I felt one afternoon, especially at the thought that my Christian brothers and sisters in Iráklion would have their regular meeting that evening. My desire to see them was so strong that I decided to walk the more than 15 miles that separated me from them. I have never walked so fast. How comforting it was to enjoy the sweet association of my brothers that evening and to refill my spiritual reservoir, as it were!

Before long, my laborious preaching efforts started to yield fruit. As in the days of the apostles, 'Jehovah continued to join to us those being saved.' (Acts 2:47) The number of Jehovah's worshipers started to grow in Crete. As others joined me in the ministry, I did not feel alone anymore. We endured physical hardship and fierce opposition. Our daily food was bread, supplemented with any eggs, olives, or vegetables we could get in exchange for literature that was accepted by those we preached to.

In the town of Ierápetra, in the southeastern part of Crete, I witnessed to Minos Kokkinakis, a cloth merchant. Despite my persistent efforts to start a Bible study with him, he had little time because of his busy life-style. However, when he finally decided to get serious about his study, he made drastic changes in his life. He also became a most zealous and active proclaimer of the good news. Emmanuel Paterakis, an 18-year-old employee of Kokkinakis, was impressed by those changes, and he soon asked for Bible literature. How glad I was to see him make steady spiritual progress and finally become a missionary!*

Meanwhile, the congregation back in my village kept growing and now had 14 publishers. I will never forget the day when I

* For the life story of Emmanuel Paterakis, see *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1996, pages 22-7.

read a letter from my fleshly sister Despina, announcing that she *and* my parents had embraced the truth and were now baptized worshippers of Jehovah!

Enduring Persecution and Banishment

The Greek Orthodox Church started to view our preaching activity like a scourge of devastating locusts, and they were determined to crush us. In March 1938, I was brought before the public prosecutor, who demanded that I leave the area immediately. I replied that our preaching activity was actually beneficial and that our work was commanded by a higher authority, our King Jesus Christ.—Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8.

The following day, I was summoned to the local police station. There I was informed that I had been labeled a public danger, and I was sentenced to one year of banishment to the Aegean island of Amorgos. After a few days, I was taken in handcuffs by boat to that island. At Amorgos there were no other Witnesses of Jehovah. Imagine my surprise when, after six months, I learned that another Witness had been banished to the island! Who would he be? Minos Kokkinakis, my Bible student back in Crete. How glad I was to have a spiritual companion! Some-time later, I had the privilege of baptizing him in the waters of Amorgos.*

Soon after I returned to Crete, I was again arrested, and this time I was banished for six months to the small town of Neapolis on that island. After the end of my six-month banishment, I was arrested, imprisoned for ten days, and then sent for four months to an island reserved for banished Communists. I realized how true were the words of the apostle Paul: "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association

* For a legal victory involving Minos Kokkinakis, see *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1993, pages 27-31. Minos Kokkinakis died in January 1999.



with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted."
—2 Timothy 3:12.

Increase Despite Opposition

With the German occupation of Greece during the years 1940-44, our preaching activity almost came to a halt. However, Jehovah's people in Greece were quickly reorganized, and we started our preaching activity anew. Trying to make up for lost time, we actively and zealously pressed on with the Kingdom work.

As expected, religious opposition flared up again. Quite often, Greek Orthodox priests would take the law into their own hands. In one of the villages, a priest instigated a mob against us. The priest himself started beating me while his son was doing the same from behind. I rushed to a nearby house for protection, while my preaching companion was dragged to the public square

of the village. There, the mobsters tore his literature, and a woman kept yelling from her balcony, "Kill him!" Finally a doctor and a passing policeman came to our rescue.

Later, in 1952, I was again arrested and was sentenced to four months of banishment, which I served at Kastelli Kissamos, Crete. Immediately afterward, I received training to visit the congregations and strengthen them spiritually. After spending two years in this type of traveling work, I married a faithful Christian sister, named Despina like my fleshly sister, who has proved to be a loyal worshiper of Jehovah ever since. After the wedding, I was assigned as a special pioneer in the town of Hania, Crete, where I still serve.

During almost 70 years of full-time service, I have covered most of Crete—an island of 3,200 square miles stretching to a length of about 150 miles. My greatest happiness has come from seeing the handful of Witnesses on this island in the 1930's grow to more than 1,100 active proclaimers of God's Kingdom today. I thank Jehovah for giving me the opportunity to have a share in helping many of these acquire accurate knowledge from the Bible and a wonderful hope for the future.

Jehovah, "the Provider of Escape"

Experience has taught me that it takes endurance and patience to help people get to know the true God. Jehovah generously provides these much needed qualities. During my 67 years of full-time service, I have repeatedly reflected on the words of the apostle Paul: "In every way we recommend ourselves as God's ministers, by the endurance of much, by tribulations, by cases of need, by difficulties, by beatings, by prisons, by disorders, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times without food." (2 Corinthians 6:4, 5) Particularly during my early years of service, my

financial situation was very bad. Jehovah, however, never forsook me and my family. He has proved to be a consistent and powerful Helper. (Hebrews 13:5, 6) We always saw his loving hand in both the gathering of his sheep and the providing for our needs.

When I look back and I see that, in a spiritual sense, the desert has blossomed, I am confident that my work was not in vain. I spent the vigor of my youth in the most beneficial way. My career in the full-time ministry has been more meaningful than any other pursuit. Now advanced in age, I can wholeheartedly encourage younger ones to 'remember their Grand Creator in the days of their youth.'—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Despite being 91 years of age, I am still able to devote more than 120 hours in the preaching work each month. Every day, I get up at 7:30 a.m. and witness to people on the street, in shops, or in parks. On an average, I place 150 magazines each month. Hearing and memory problems now make life difficult for me, but my loving spiritual brothers and sisters—my large spiritual family—as well as the families of my two daughters, have proved to be a real support.

Above all, I have learned to put my trust in Jehovah. All along, he has proved to be "my crag and my stronghold and the Provider of escape for me."—Psalm 18:2.

In Our Next Issue

Does Anyone Really Care?

Why Keep Your Promises?

Does Jehovah Ask Too Much of Us?

Mary Chooses "the Good Portion"

IN Jesus' day, Jewish women were hemmed in by rabbinic traditions. Hence, they were discouraged from studying the Law. Indeed, one opinion quoted in the Mishnah stated: "If any man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law it is as though he taught her lechery."—*Sotah* 3:4.

As a result, many women in first-century Judea were not well educated. "There is no evidence that prior to Jesus' ministry Jewish women were ever allowed to be disciples of a great teacher, much less travel with such a teacher, or to instruct anyone other than children," notes *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. In further denigration of women, some religious leaders even laid down a rule stipulating that a man should not speak to a woman in public!

Jesus disregarded such ungodly attitudes. He taught women as well as men, and both men and women could be found among his followers. (Luke 8:1-3) On one occasion, Jesus was invited to be a guest of Martha and Mary. (Luke 10:38) These two women were the sisters of Lazarus, and all three were disciples and good friends of Jesus. (John 11:5) This family may have been prominent, considering the great number who came to comfort Martha and Mary when Lazarus died. In any event, what occurred in their home when Jesus was a guest there provided a valuable lesson not only for them but also for us.

Learning at the Feet of Jesus

No doubt, Martha and Mary were eager to provide Jesus with a sumptuous feast, and perhaps this was well within their means. (Compare John 12:1-3.) However, when their guest arrived, Mary "sat down at the feet of the Lord and kept listening to his word." (Luke 10:39) No tradition

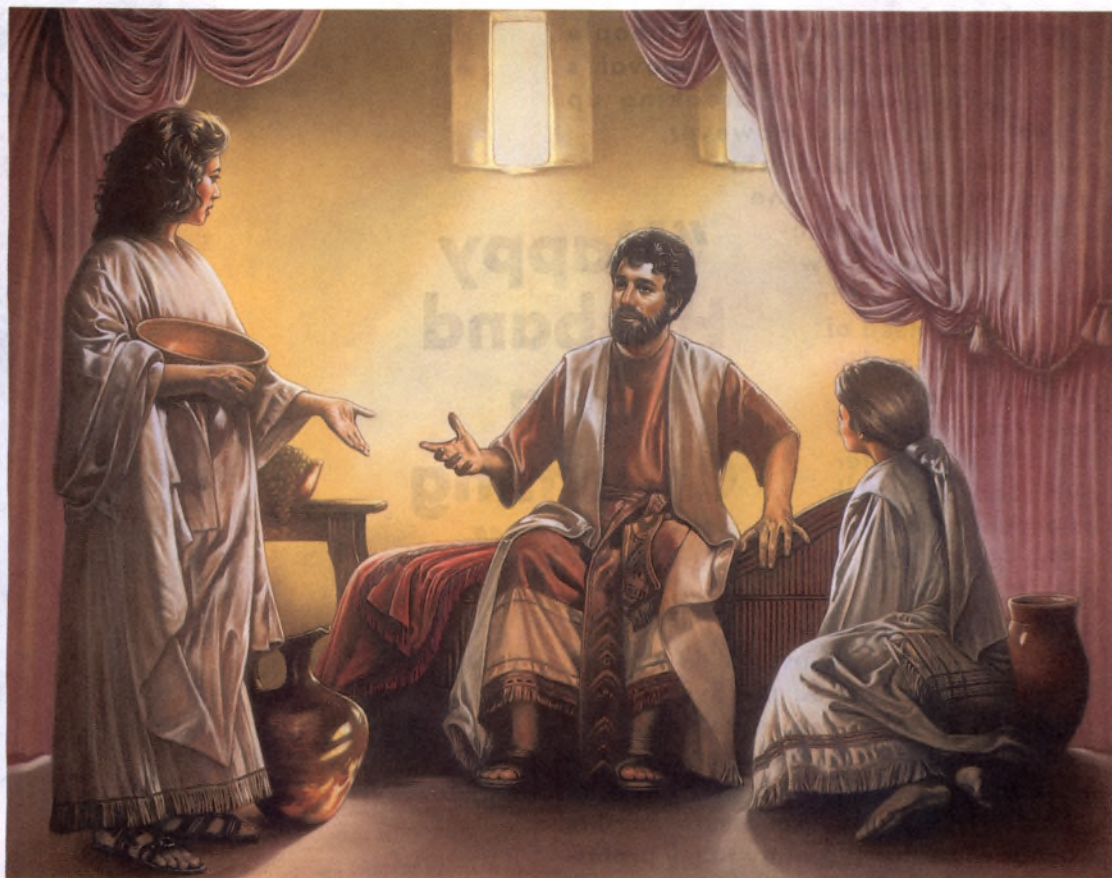
of men would prevent Jesus from teaching a sincere woman who was so eager to learn! We can imagine Mary sitting in front of Jesus, putting herself in the position of a pupil who is fully absorbed in listening to the teaching of her Master.—Compare Deuteronomy 33:3; Acts 22:3.

Unlike Mary, Martha "was distracted with attending to many duties." In preparing an elaborate meal, she was quite busy with her demanding chores. Soon, Martha became upset that she was left doing all the work while her sister was sitting at the feet of Jesus! So Martha interrupted Jesus' words to Mary, perhaps abruptly, stating: "Lord, does it not matter to you that my sister has left me alone to attend to things? Tell her, therefore, to join in helping me."—Luke 10:40.

In itself, there was nothing wrong with Martha's request. After all, preparing a meal for a group is hard work, and the burden should not fall on one person. However, Jesus saw in her statement an opportunity to teach a valuable lesson. "Martha, Martha," he said, "you are anxious and disturbed about many things. A few things, though, are needed, or just one. For her part, Mary chose the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her."—Luke 10:41, 42.

Jesus was not saying that Martha lacked interest in spiritual things. On the contrary, he knew her to be a woman of deep godly devotion.* That is undoubtedly what prompted her to invite Jesus to her home in the first place. However, in his mild reproof, Jesus was pointing out that Martha, by her anxious attention to the meal, was missing out

* That Martha was a spiritual woman of great faith is evident from her conversation with Jesus following the death of her brother, Lazarus. On this occasion, it was Martha who showed a greater eagerness to meet with her Master.—John 11:19-29.



on a rare opportunity to receive personal instruction from the Son of God.

Granted, the culture of the day might have supported the view that a woman's worth was best proved by her competence at domestic chores. But Jesus' words showed that women, like men, could sit down at the feet of the Son of God and receive the sayings of life! (John 4:7-15; Acts 5:14) In view of this, it would have been far better for Martha to provide just a few dishes—or even just one—if it would have afforded her the opportunity to sit at the feet of the Master and learn from him.—Compare Matthew 6:25.

Lesson for Us

Today, both men and women are found among those who respond to Jesus' invitation to "take

life's water free." (Revelation 22:17) Moved by love, some—much like Martha—do their utmost to minister to the needs of fellow believers. They are practical-minded and quick to take action, and Jehovah promises to reward their labors of love. (Hebrews 6:10; 13:16) Others perhaps more closely resemble Mary. They are quiet and contemplative. Their eagerness to meditate upon God's Word helps them to stay solidly rooted in the faith.—Ephesians 3:17-19.

Both types of individuals fill a vital need in the Christian congregation. In the end, however, all should 'choose the good portion' by putting primary emphasis on spiritual things. By making sure of the more important things, we will have Jehovah's favor and blessing.—Philippians 1:9-11.

OCCASIONALLY, some people pointedly accuse Jehovah's Witnesses of breaking up marriages. However, numerous successful marriages where only one spouse is one of Jehovah's Witnesses show this to be far from the truth. Taking heed of the Bible's counsel in family life makes for happy marriages, as the following letter published in a French newspaper shows.

"Happy Husband of a Charming Wife"

"For almost 28 years now, I've been the happy husband of a charming wife who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses. She raised my five children, of whom two were not her own, with equal care and much love. Being at the present time a company director with 45 employees, I can assure you that she has contributed greatly to my professional success. That is why when I saw an article in my regular newspaper presenting Jehovah's Witnesses as a threat to the Lot-et-Garonne region, I decided to provide you with an authoritative testimony."

The letter also says: "They do not smoke or get drunk. Is this a threat? They are tolerant Christians who do not impose on anybody the rules that they follow. Rather, they are an example in many areas. . . . They are not involved in financial scandals or in drug trafficking. They do not take a

vow of chastity, and I can assure you, they live normal lives. . . .

"You may well ask me: So why aren't you yourself one of Jehovah's Witnesses? Because Christian faith and strict morals are needed, and these are not easily found among common mortals."

