

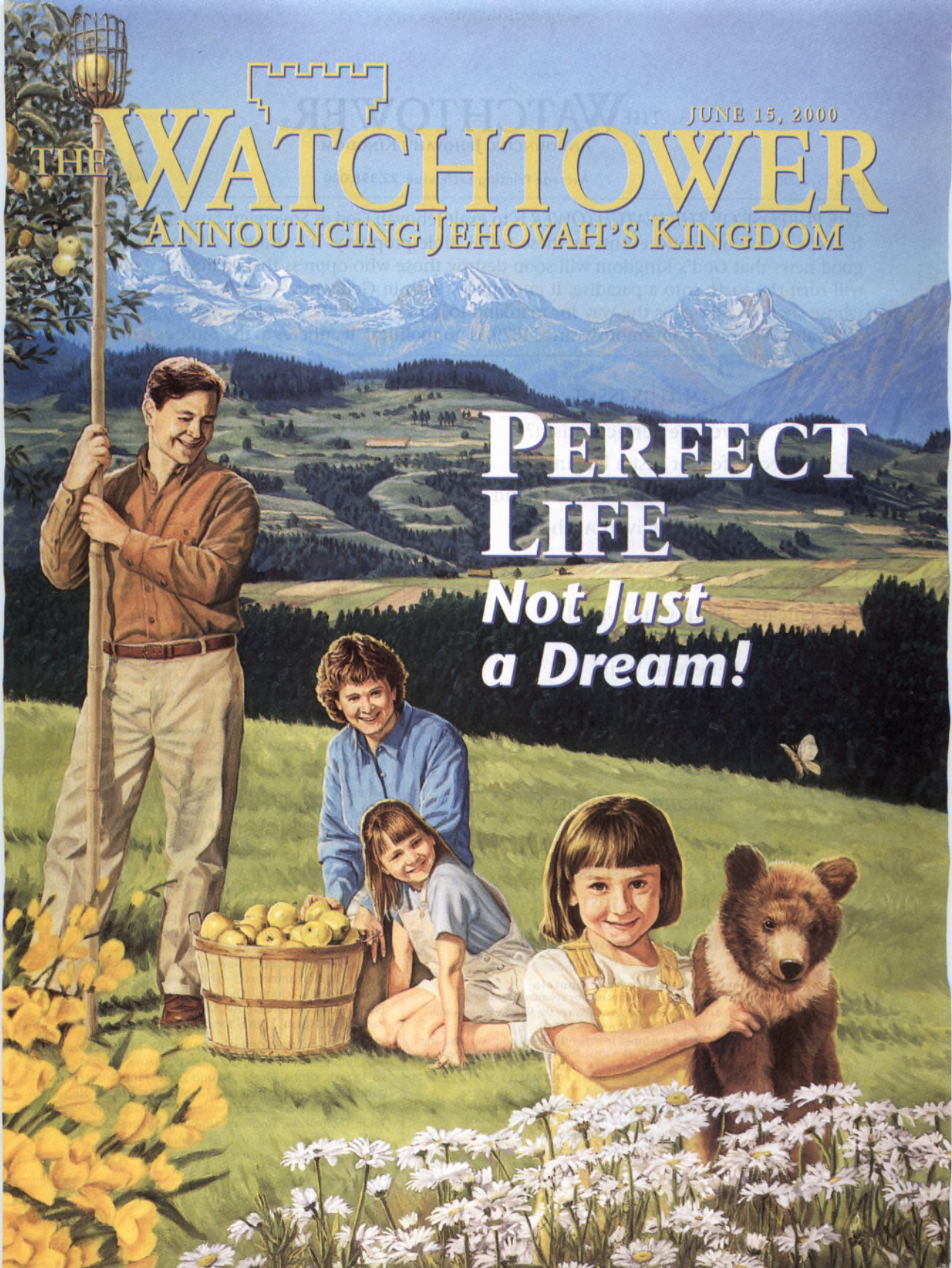
JUNE 15, 2000

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**PERFECT
LIFE**

*Not Just
a Dream!*



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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Why Overcome Perfectionism?

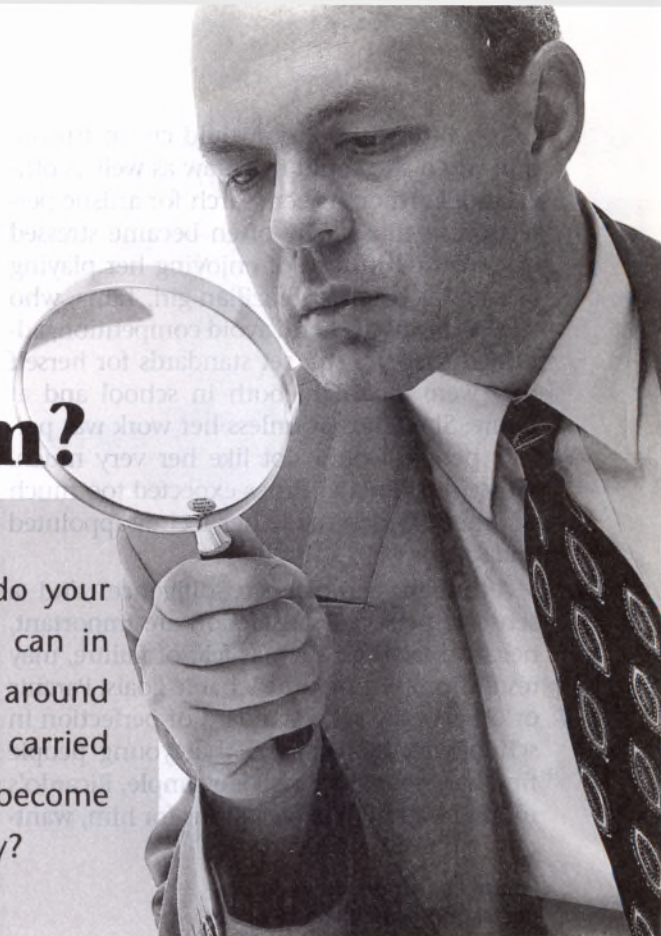
Are you always striving hard to do your very best? Clearly, your doing so can in many ways benefit you and those around you. On the other hand, some have carried matters to an extreme and have become perfectionists. What does that imply?

WELL, one meaning of the word "perfectionism" is "a disposition to regard anything short of perfection as unacceptable." You have likely encountered people having that disposition. You can see that the extreme demands that they place on others can cause many problems, creating a climate of dissatisfaction and discouragement. Most balanced people recognize that perfectionism in the sense of extreme and unreasonable demands in all matters of life is not truly desirable. It is something to be overcome. A problem, however, is that when it comes to our own attitude or disposition, it may be difficult to recognize a tendency toward such perfectionism, so it is a challenge to overcome it.

Nelson has a great deal of responsibili-

ty and many problems to solve. He regularly analyzes statistics, and production is a priority. Perfectionism is often seen as necessary for success in a competitive job market. Although some may appreciate Nelson's efficiency, his perfectionism causes him physical problems, such as headaches and stress. Do you identify with Nelson?

Young people are also affected by perfectionism. As a child, Rita, from Rio de Janeiro, liked going to school. She tried not to appear ambitious, yet she was devastated if she did not get top marks. Rita says: "From childhood, I compared myself with others who had plenty of time, while I was always stressed and rushing to do things. I never felt that I had time to rest because there were always things that had to be done."



As a little girl, Maria would cry in frustration when she could not draw as well as others did. Further, in her search for artistic perfection in music, she often became stressed and worried instead of enjoying her playing or singing. Another Brazilian girl, Tânia, who tried to be discreet and avoid competition, admitted that she still set standards for herself that were too high, both in school and at home. She felt that unless her work was perfect, people would not like her very much. Moreover, Tânia at times expected too much of others, which made her feel disappointed and sad.

Although competence, diligence, and a sense of personal satisfaction are important, negative feelings, such as fear of failure, may result from setting unreachable goals. Parents or others may set a standard of perfection in schoolwork or in sports that young people find hard to live up to. For example, Ricardo's mother had high expectations for him, want-

Parents or others may require perfection, which young ones cannot achieve

ing him to become a doctor, play the piano, and speak several languages. Can you see that this approach, carried too far, invites problems or disappointments?

Why Avoid Perfectionism?

Work of superior quality, meeting high standards of precision and excellence, is in demand. So people must compete in the job market. Another factor causing many to strive harder and harder is fear of losing one's means of sustenance. Some workers become like the athlete who makes extreme sacrifices to set a new record. Then, when faced with tough competition, he may feel driven to train even more, perhaps using chemical substances to improve and—he hopes—to win. Replacing a healthy pursuit of excellence, perfectionism causes people to be “motivated by the fear of failure” or “driven to be number one.”—*The Feeling Good Handbook*.

Admittedly, some feel that what they may do in the arts or in sports can always be improved. Still, according to Dr. Robert S. Eliot, “perfectionism is expectation that never meets reality.” He adds: “It is comprised of guilt, defensiveness, and the fear of ridicule.” Hence, how true are the words of wise King Solomon: “I myself have seen all the hard work and all the proficiency in work, that it means the rivalry of one toward another; this also is vanity and a striving after the wind.”—Ecclesiastes 4:4.

What can you do if you tend to be a perfectionist? Is it true that the harder you strive, the more disappointed you get? Would you like to be less demanding and more relaxed? What does it mean to be perfect? Do you not yearn to use your fullest potential while avoiding perfectionism? If imperfect humans can use their God-given abilities to discover things for the benefit of others, imagine what mankind could achieve under perfect conditions and divine guidance!



Perfect Life Not Just a Dream!

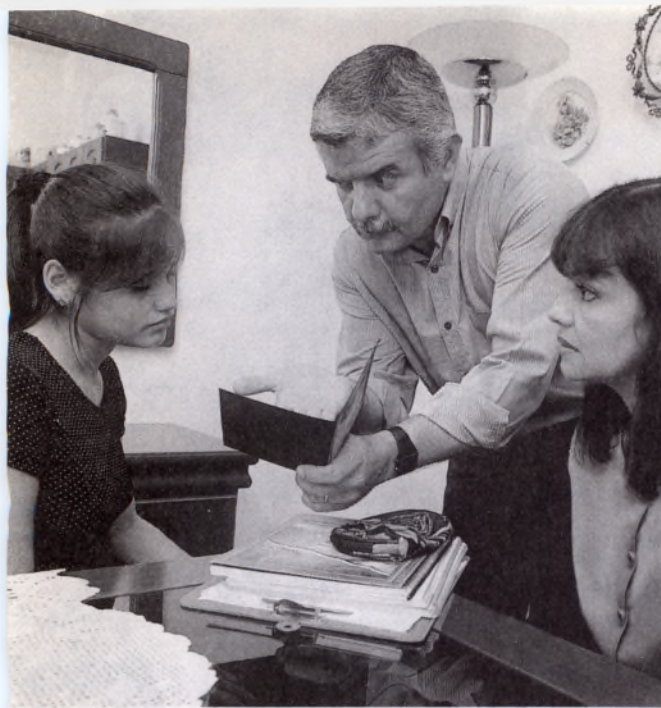
A perfect world—what does it mean to you? Imagine a human society where there is no crime, drug abuse, famine, poverty, or injustice. All enjoy excellent emotional and physical health. There is no sorrow or unhappiness because even death has been eliminated. Is it realistic to yearn for such a world?

WHILE not ignoring the advances of science and technology, most people do not really believe that human intelligence or learning will bring about a perfect world in which all will live in peace and happiness. On the other hand, the human tendency is undeniably to want to improve things and to correct imperfections. Of course, mere unrealistic dreaming will not help the homeless and the poor, nor will it satisfy the disabled and the sick who long for relief from their suffering. A perfect world simply will not come about through human creativity. Despite the present misery and oppression, however, there are solid reasons for believing that a world that you would call perfect is actually near at hand.

When you think about perfect life, the life of Jesus Christ may come to your mind. Jesus

was not the only perfect human ever to live on earth. Adam and Eve, created in God's image, enjoyed perfect life in a paradise. However, they lost this excellent condition because of their rebellion against their heavenly Father. (Genesis 3:1-6) The Creator, though, instilled in humans a desire to live forever. Ecclesiastes 3:11 testifies to that: "Everything [God] has made pretty in its time. Even time indefinite he has put in their heart, that mankind may never find out the work that the true God has made from the start to the finish."

While imperfection and sin led mankind to a life of "futility" and "enslavement to corruption," note the comforting words of the apostle Paul: "The eager expectation of the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility,



We can improve the way we view ourselves and others, avoiding perfectionism or fussiness

not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope that the creation itself also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Romans 8:19-21) The Bible makes clear that God’s provisions for restoring perfect human life are made available through Jesus Christ.—John 3:16; 17:3.

In addition to this wonderful hope for the future, we all have the potential for advancing spiritually, making our progress manifest even now.

Try to Be Reasonable

Jesus Christ considered the matter of perfection to be so important that he told a large audience: “You must accordingly be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5: 48) Did Jesus really expect us to be flawless in the present wicked system? No. We certainly should strive to cultivate the qualities of generosity, kindness, and love toward our fellowmen, yet we often fail to do what is right. Even one of Jesus’ apostles wrote: “If we confess our

sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we make the statement: ‘We have not sinned,’ we are making him a liar, and his word is not in us.”—1 John 1:9, 10.

Nevertheless, we can improve the way we view ourselves and treat others, avoiding extremes. Who can find a better prescription for acquiring a balanced, reasonable personality than that found in God’s Word, the Bible? Cultivating such qualities as joy and moderation will help us in getting along with others at work, with our marriage mate, and with our parents or children. The apostle Paul admonished Christians: “Always rejoice in the Lord. Once more I will say, Rejoice! Let your reasonableness become known to all men.”—Philippians 4:4, 5.

Benefits of Being Reasonable

When you are reasonable in your expectations and avoid self-tormenting and self-defeating perfectionism, you benefit yourself as well as others. Knowing your real potential involves being both realistic and reasonable about what you want to do. Remember, God created us to live on earth and to find satisfaction in meaningful work that benefits ourselves and others.—Genesis 2:7-9.

If you have been too demanding of yourself, why not turn to Jehovah in prayer? Obtaining God’s favor will bring you great relief. Jehovah knows our makeup and imperfect state, so he is not unreasonable or hard to please. The psalmist assures us: “As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:13, 14) How grateful we can be that God deals with humans in such a merciful way! He knows our limitations, yet we can be as precious in his eyes as beloved children.

Instead of pursuing perfectionism, how much wiser it is to cultivate spiritual discern-

ment and a balanced viewpoint! Moreover, we can be sure that no one can prevent Jehovah from fulfilling his purpose to elevate mankind to perfection under God's Kingdom. But what does human perfection mean?

Perfect Life Better Than Perfectionism

Perfection does not mean being a perfectionist. Those privileged to live in Paradise on earth under God's Kingdom will certainly not be demanding, self-righteous individuals. One of the requirements for surviving the great tribulation is heartfelt appreciation for the ransom sacrifice, as expressed by the international great crowd that the apostle John described: "Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14) All survivors of the approaching great tribulation will be grateful that Christ willingly died for them and all those exercising faith in him. His loving sacrifice lays the basis for bringing lasting relief from their imperfections and weaknesses. —John 3:16; Romans 8:21, 22.

What will perfect life be like? Instead of competition and selfish ambition, love and kindness among humans will make life worth living, eliminating anxiety and low self-esteem. Yet, perfect life will not be boring or monotonous. God's Word does not provide all the details about Paradise but does describe the kind of life we can expect: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. For like the days of a tree will the days of my people be; and the work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full. They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance." —Isaiah 65:21-23.

Rather than wondering about what kind of entertainment, shopping facilities, technology, or transportation the Kingdom will pro-



Why not envision yourself already enjoying peaceful and righteous conditions in Paradise?

vide, imagine yourself enjoying the fulfillment of these words: "The wolf and the lamb themselves will feed as one, and the lion will eat straw just like the bull; and as for the serpent, his food will be dust. They will do no harm nor cause any ruin in all my holy mountain," Jehovah has said." (Isaiah 65:25) How different perfect life will be from what you find today! If you come to be one of those counted worthy to live at that time, you will have reason for confidence that your loving heavenly Father will take an interest in you and your family. "Take exquisite delight in Jehovah, and he will give you the requests of your heart." —Psalm 37:4.

Perfect life is not just a dream. Jehovah's loving purpose regarding mankind will be fully realized. You and your family can be among those who will be raised to human perfection and live forever in God's new world. The Bible foretells: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." —Psalm 37:29.



RESCUE ON ROBINSON



The majestic jagged mountain called El Yunque (The Anvil)

ROBINSON CRUSOE is one of the three islands in the Pacific Ocean that make up the archipelago called Juan Fernández, about 400 miles off the coast of Chile.* The 36-square-mile island got that name from a famous 18th-century novel entitled *Robinson Crusoe*, written by the English author Daniel Defoe. The novel apparently was loosely based on the adventures of a Scotsman, Alexander Selkirk, who lived alone on the island for some four years.

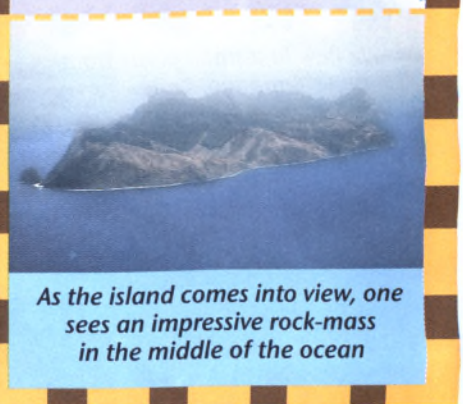
* The island is officially named Más a Tierra.

A wooden sign on the island states in part: "At this site, day after day for more than four years, the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk anxiously searched the horizon for the rescue boat that would free him from his isolation." Eventually, Selkirk was rescued and taken back to his homeland, to a world that no longer satisfied him after he had lived in his own little paradise. He reportedly later said: "Oh, my beloved island! I wish I had never left thee!"

With the passing of time, the island came to be used as a penal colony, inhabited by some who had committed "crimes of faith" against the Catholic Church. What a change from the paradisaical island that Selkirk once knew! Present-day residents of the island, however, enjoy a peaceful serenity unknown in many parts of the world. The laid-back life-style, which is typical of many island cultures, makes it easy to start conversations with just about anyone.

Officially, Robinson Crusoe has about 500 inhabitants, but during most of the year, only about 400 people occupy the is-

CRUSOE ISLAND



As the island comes into view, one sees an impressive rock-mass in the middle of the ocean

land. In part, the reason is that some mothers and their children live on the Chilean mainland during the school year, returning to the island only during the vacation months to spend time with the rest of the family.

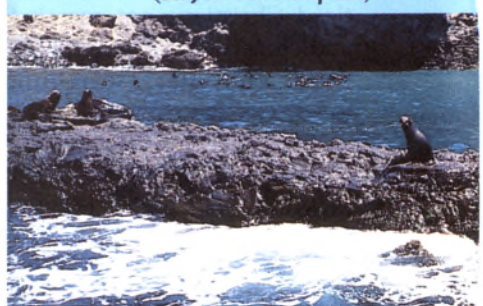
In spite of the beautiful gardenlike surroundings on Robinson Crusoe, some islanders feel a spiritual void and are searching for answers. Others have felt as if they needed to be spiritually rescued.

A Spiritual Rescue

Such a spiritual rescue work began about 1979. A woman who was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses in Santiago, Chile, moved to the island and started to teach others what she had learned. Sometime later a congregation elder who was visiting the island for secular reasons was surprised to find a small group of Bible students progressing spiritually with the help of that woman. By the time the elder visited the island again three months later, this isolated Bible teacher and two



*The village of San Juan Bautista
(St. John the Baptist)*



*Small islets serve as resting places
for fur seals and sea lions*



*We flew in a small plane from
Santiago, Chile*

*The rugged coast of
Robinson Crusoe Island*



of her students were ready to be baptized, so the elder presided over their baptism. Later, one of these newly baptized Christians got married and, together with her husband, continued searching for others who needed spiritual rescue. Her husband took the lead in building a modest Kingdom Hall, which contin-



The modest Kingdom Hall on the island

ues to serve the small group on the island. In time, for economic reasons, they left Robinson Crusoe and moved to a congregation in central Chile, where they continue actively serving Jehovah.

Little by little, the small group on the island continued to grow as others were rescued from false religion. However, since students must move to the mainland for their high school education, the group was reduced to two baptized sisters and one young girl. The group grows during the vacation period when some mothers return to the island. This serves to rejuvenate the three isolated Christians who remain there all year long. As a result of the hard work of these sisters, Jehovah's Witnesses are well-known on Robinson Crusoe. True, some islanders have taken a stand against their work and try to pressure others to reject the Kingdom message. Nevertheless, seeds of Bible truth planted in sincere hearts continue to sprout.

Strengthening Those Who Have Been Rescued

Once a year a traveling overseer visits the island. What is it like to visit a handful of Witnesses on a remote island? One circuit overseer describes his first visit to Robinson Crusoe:

"This trip was a dream come true. It started at 7:00 a.m. when we left Valparaiso to drive to Santiago's Cerrillos Airport. We boarded a small seven-passenger plane. After a flight of 2 hours and 45 minutes, we saw in the distance a mountain peak that rose above the clouds. As we got closer, the island came into view—an impressive rock-mass in the middle of the ocean. It seemed to be floating in a watery expanse, like a ship lost at sea.

"After landing, a boat took us to the village. Here and there,

rocky masses protruding from the sea form small islets that serve as resting places for Juan Fernández fur seals. The fur seals are a protected species because their numbers have been greatly diminished. Suddenly, something flew by alongside the boat before disappearing again in the sea. It was a flying fish, whose pleated fins resemble wings. It seemed to enjoy leaping out of the water to catch insects. Of course, sometimes the catcher also gets caught; his leaps may draw the attention of other predators who are ready to swallow him as he makes his splash-down.

"Finally, we arrived at the village of San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist). There were quite a few islanders standing on the dock, either waiting for their visitors or just curious about who might be arriving this time. We were impressed by a beautiful panorama—the majestic and jagged mountain called El Yunque (The Anvil), carpeted as if with dark-green velvet, and in the background, a clear, blue sky bordered by masses of white clouds.

"We soon noticed a group of our Christian sisters and their children waiting for us on the dock. It was vacation time, so the group was larger than normal. After exchanging warm greetings, we were taken to the attractive cabin that we would call our home for a week.

"It was a very special week, and we realized that it would pass by quickly. We needed to make good use of our time. That very day, right after lunch, we visited a Bible student who was soon to become our spiritual sister and part of God's spiritual paradise. She was beaming with joy but was also a bit nervous. Her long-awaited goal of baptism was nearing. We considered some necessary information with her so that she could qualify as a publisher of the good news. The next day, she participated in the preaching work for the first time. The third day, we began to consider the requirements for baptism with her. Before the week ended, she was baptized.

"The meetings held during the week were well supported, with a maximum attendance of 14. Each day there were arrangements for field service, return visits, Bible studies, and shepherding calls. What an encouragement for the sisters who carry out their activity by themselves all year long!"

It has been more difficult for men on the island to respond to the truth, perhaps because of the strenuous demands of their secular work. The main work is catching lobsters, which calls for much dedication. Prejudice also plays a role in the negative reaction of many. Nevertheless, it is hoped that more islanders, both men and women, will respond in the future.

Until now, ten individuals have been rescued on the island by coming to know the truth and Jehovah God's purposes. Some of them have since left the island for various reasons. But whether they remain or not, their spiritual rescue has proved to be much more significant than Alexander Selkirk's rescue. They now enjoy a spiritual paradise wherever they may live. The sisters who still live on the island and their children enjoy gardenlike surroundings, but even more than that, they have the prospect of living when the entire earth will be a true paradise in every sense of the word.

The Rescue Work Continues

Geographically, this small group of Jehovah's Witnesses on Robinson Crusoe live very far from the rest of their spiritual brothers and sisters. Yet, they do not feel abandoned, as did the Scotsman Selkirk. By means of the constant flow of theocratic literature, the videos of assemblies and conventions that are sent to them from the Watch Tower Society's Chile branch three times a year, and the yearly visit of the circuit overseer, they maintain close contact with Jehovah's organization. So they continue to be an active part of 'the entire association of brothers in the world.' —1 Peter 5:9.

HONOR THE ONES GIVEN AUTHORITY OVER YOU

"Honor men of all sorts, have love for the whole association of brothers, be in fear of God, have honor for the king."—1 PETER 2:17.

"THE kids have all the rights. There's no respect for parents," bemoans a mother. "Question Authority" says a bumper sticker. Those are but two reflections of a situation that prevails today, as you must know. A general lack of respect for parents, teachers, employers, and government officials is common all over the world.

² Some may just shrug their shoulders and say, 'Well, those in positions of authority don't merit my respect.' At times, that may be hard to deny. We are faced with a steady flow of news about corrupt government officials, greedy employers, incompetent teachers, and abusive parents. Happily, few Christians view those in authority in the congregation in that same light.—Matthew 24:45-47.

³ As Christians, we have "compelling reason" for respecting those exercising secular authority. The apostle Paul admonished Christians to "be in subjection to the superior authorities, for there is no authority except by God; the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God." (Romans 13:1, 2, 5; 1 Peter 2:13-15) Paul also showed a valid reason for obeying the authorities in the family: "You wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as it is becoming in the Lord. You children,

1, 2. How do people view authority today? Why?
3, 4. Why should Christians show respect for those in positions of authority?



*Sarah deeply respected
Abraham's authority
and was happy*

be obedient to your parents in everything, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord." (Colossians 3:18, 20) Congregation elders are worthy of our honor because 'the holy spirit has appointed them overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God.' (Acts 20:28) It is out of respect for Jehovah that we honor human authorities. Naturally, honoring Jehovah's authority always comes first in our lives.—Acts 5:29.

⁴ With Jehovah's supreme authority in mind, let us consider examples of some who did not respect those in positions of authority and of some who did.

Disrespect Leads to Disapproval

⁵ From the history of King David, we can see how Jehovah views those who look down on God-given authority. When David had the ark of the covenant brought to Jerusalem, his wife Michal "got to see King David leaping and dancing around before Jehovah; and she began to despise him in her heart." Michal should have recognized David as not only the family head but also the king of the land. However, she voiced her feelings in sarcasm: "How glorious the king of Israel made himself today when he uncovered himself today to the eyes of the slave girls of his servants, just as one of the empty-headed men uncovers himself out-

5. What disrespectful attitude did Michal show toward David, and to what did that lead?

right!" A result of this was that Michal never produced children.—2 Samuel 6:14-23.

⁶ An outrageous example of not honoring God-appointed theocratic leadership was that of Korah. As a Kohathite, what a privilege he enjoyed serving Jehovah at the tabernacle! Still, he found fault with Moses and Aaron, God's anointed leaders of the Israelites. Korah banded together with other chieftains of Israel and brazenly told Moses and Aaron: "The whole assembly are all of them holy and Jehovah is in their midst. Why, then, should you lift yourselves up above the congregation of Jehovah?" How did Jehovah view the attitude of Korah and his supporters? God viewed their action as dishonoring Jehovah himself. After seeing all those on their side swallowed up in the earth, Korah and the 250 chieftains were destroyed by a fire from Jehovah.—Numbers 16:1-3, 28-35.

⁷ In the first-century Christian congregation, there were those who disregarded theocratic authority. The "superfine apostles" in the Corinthian congregation had a disrespectful attitude toward Paul. They criticized his speaking ability, saying: "His presence in person is weak and his speech contemptible." (2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:5) Whether Paul was an outstanding speaker or not, he deserved respect as an apostle. But was Paul's speech really contemptible? His public discourses recorded in the Bible give evidence of how convincing a speaker he was. Why, as a result of a brief discussion with Herod Agrippa II, an "expert on all . . . the controversies among Jews," Paul brought the king to the point of saying: "In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian"! (Acts

13:15-43; 17:22-34; 26:1-28) Yet, the superfine apostles in Corinth accused him of being contemptible in his speech! How did Jehovah view their attitude? In a message for the overseers of the Ephesian congregation, Jesus Christ spoke favorably of the ones who refused to be drawn away by those 'who said they were apostles, but they were not.'—Revelation 2:2.

Respect Despite Imperfection



Michal failed to respect David's authority as family head and king

⁸ There are many examples in the Bible of those who honored individuals in authority, even when these misused or abused their authority. David was one such fine example. King Saul, under whom he served, became jealous of David's achievements and sought to kill him. (1 Samuel 18:8-12; 19:9-11; 23:26) Still, though having opportunities to kill Saul, David said: "It is unthinkable, on my part, from Jehovah's standpoint, to thrust my hand out against the anointed of Jehovah!" (1 Samuel 24:3-6; 26:7-13) David

knew that Saul was in the wrong, but he left it up to Jehovah to judge him. (1 Samuel 24:12, 15; 26:22-24) He did not speak abusively of or to Saul.

⁹ Was David distressed while he was being mistreated? "There are . . . tyrants that do seek my soul," David cried out to Jehovah. (Psalm 54:3) He poured out his heart to Jehovah: "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God . . . Strong ones make an attack upon me, for no revolt on my part, nor any sin on my part, O Jehovah. Though there is no error, they run and get themselves ready. Do rouse yourself at my calling and see." (Psalm 59:1-4) Have you

8. How did David show that he honored the authority Jehovah had given to Saul?

9. (a) How did David feel while being mistreated by Saul? (b) How can we tell that David's respect for Saul was genuine?

6. How did Jehovah view Korah's disrespect for His anointed?

7. Did the "superfine apostles" have any reason to criticize Paul's authority?

ever felt the same way—that you had done no wrong to a person in authority, yet he kept giving you a hard time? David did not fail to show respect to Saul. Upon Saul's death, instead of exulting in joy, David composed a dirge: "Saul and Jonathan, the lovable ones and the pleasant ones during their life . . . Swifter than the eagles they were, mightier than the lions they were. You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul." (2 Samuel 1:23, 24) What a fine example of genuine respect for the anointed of Jehovah, even though David had been wronged by Saul!

¹⁰ In the Christian era, we also find outstanding examples of those honoring God-given authorities. Take, for instance, Paul. He showed respect for the decisions of the first-century governing body of the Christian congregation. During Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, the governing body counseled him to cleanse himself ceremonially to show others that he harbored no animosity toward the Mosaic Law. Paul could have reasoned: 'Those brothers previously instructed me to leave Jerusalem when my life was threatened. Now they want me to demonstrate in public that I respect the Mosaic Law. I've already written a letter to the Galatians advising them to keep free from observing the Law. If I go to the temple, others may misunderstand my action, thinking that I am compromising with those of the circumcised class.' However, Paul evidently did not reason that way. Since no compromise of Christian principles was involved, he respected and complied with the counsel of the first-century governing body. The immediate result was that Paul had to be rescued from a Jewish mob, and he subsequently spent two years in prison. In the long term, God's will was done. Paul witnessed before high officials in Caesarea and then was taken at government expense to Rome to witness before Caesar himself.—Acts 9:26-30; 21:20-26; 23:11; 24:27; Galatians 2:12; 4:9, 10.

10. What fine example did Paul set in honoring the God-given authority of the governing body, and to what did that lead?

Do You Show Respect?

¹¹ Do you show due respect for those in authority? Christians are commanded to "render to all their dues, . . . to him who calls for honor, such honor." Indeed, our subjection to the "superior authorities" includes not just that we pay our taxes but that we honor the authorities by our conduct and speech. (Romans 13:1-7) Faced with government officials who may be harsh, how do we react? In Chiapas State, Mexico, the authorities in one community had taken over the farmland belonging to 57 families of Jehovah's Witnesses because these Christians did not participate in certain religious festivals. At the meetings that were held to resolve the matter, the Witnesses, clean and neatly dressed, always spoke with dignity and respect. Over a year later, the decision was rendered in their favor. Their attitude won the respect of some observers to the extent that they too wanted to become Jehovah's Witnesses!

¹² How can you show respect for God-given authority in the family? After discussing Jesus' example in suffering evil, the apostle Peter said: "In like manner, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, in order that, if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect." (1 Peter 3:1, 2; Ephesians 5:22-24) Peter here emphasized the importance of a wife's being in subjection to her husband with "deep respect," even though some husbands may do little to deserve such respect. A wife's respectful attitude may win the heart of her unbelieving husband.

¹³ In the context of these scriptures, Peter draws our attention to the example of Sarah, whose husband, Abraham, was an outstand-

11. How can we show respect for secular authority?
12. Why is it important to have "deep respect" for one's unbelieving husband?
13. How can wives honor their husbands?



"It is unthinkable, on my part, . . . to thrust my hand out against the anointed of Jehovah!"

ing example of faith. (Romans 4:16, 17; Galatians 3:6-9; 1 Peter 3:6) Should wives with believing husbands give them any less honor than wives with unbelieving mates give theirs? What if you do not agree with your husband on some matter? Jesus gave some advice that can be applied in a general way here: "If someone under authority impresses you into service for a mile, go with him two miles." (Matthew 5:41) Do you honor your husband by going along with his wishes? If this seems too difficult, share your feelings about the matter with him. Do not assume that he knows how you feel. But when you make your wishes known to him, do so *in a respectful manner*. The Bible admonishes us: "Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt, so as to know how you ought to give an answer to each one." —Colossians 4:6.

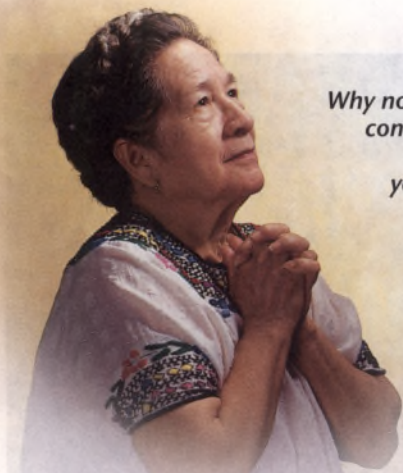
¹⁴ How about you children? God's Word

14. What does showing honor to parents involve?

commands: "Children, be obedient to your parents in union with the Lord, for this is righteous: 'Honor your father and your mother'; which is the first command with a promise." (Ephesians 6:1-3) Notice that being obedient to your parents is considered synonymous with 'honoring your father and your mother.' The Greek word rendered "honor" carries the meaning "to prize" or "fix a valuation upon." Thus, being obedient requires more than begrudgingly following the parental rules that may seem unreasonable to you. God asks you to esteem your parents highly and value their guidance.—Proverbs 15:5.

¹⁵ If your parents do something that tends to diminish your respect for them, what then? Try to see matters from their point of view. Have they not "caused your birth" and provided for you? (Proverbs 23:22) Are they not motivated by love for you? (Hebrews 12:7-11)

15. How can children maintain their respect even if they feel that their parents made a mistake?



Why not bring your concerns before Jehovah in your prayers?

Speak respectfully to your parents, explaining in a spirit of mildness how you feel. Even if they respond in a way that you do not like, refrain from speaking disrespectfully to them. (Proverbs 24:29) Remember how David maintained his respect for Saul even when the king strayed from following God's counsel. Ask Jehovah to help you to deal with your feelings. "Before him pour out your heart," said David. "God is a refuge for us."—Psalm 62:8; Lamentations 3:25-27.

Honor Those Taking the Lead

¹⁶ Congregation elders are appointed by holy spirit, yet they are still imperfect and make mistakes. (Psalm 130:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Acts 20:28; James 3:2) As a result, some in the congregation may feel dissatisfied with the elders. How should we react when we feel that something in the congregation is not handled just right, or at least so it seems? Note the contrast between the first-century false teachers and the angels: "Daring, self-willed, they [false teachers] do not tremble at glorious ones but speak abusively, whereas angels, although they are greater in strength and power, do not bring against them an accusation in abusive terms, not doing so out of respect for Jehovah." (2 Peter 2:10-13) While the false teachers spoke abusively of "glorious ones"—elders

16. What can we learn from the examples of the false teachers and the angels?

who were given authority in the first-century Christian congregation—the angels did not speak abusively of the false teachers who were causing disunity among the brothers. The angels, being in a superior position and having a keener sense of justice than humans, were aware of what was taking place in the congregation. Yet, "out of respect for Jehovah," they left the judgment to God.—Hebrews 2:6, 7; Jude 9.

¹⁷ Even if something is not handled just the way it should be, should we not have faith in Jesus Christ as the living Head of the Christian congregation? Is he not aware of what is happening in his own worldwide congregation? Should we not respect his way of handling the situation and recognize his ability to control matters? Really, 'who are we to be judging our neighbor?' (James 4:12; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 1:18) Why not bring your concerns before Jehovah in your prayers?

¹⁸ Because of human imperfection, difficulties or problems may arise. There may even be times when an elder errs, causing some to be disturbed. Our acting hastily under such circumstances will not change the situation.

17. How does your faith come into play when dealing with problems wherein you feel that elders are in the wrong?

18, 19. What can you do if you feel that an elder has erred?

How Would You Answer?

- What good reason do we have for honoring those who have authority?
- How do Jehovah and Jesus view those who do not respect God-given authority?
- What fine examples do we have of those who honored the ones given authority?
- What can we do if one who has authority over us seems to have erred?

It may only serve to aggravate the problem. Those having spiritual discernment will wait on Jehovah to set things straight and administer whatever discipline may be needed in his own time and way.—2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 12:7-11.

¹⁹ What if you feel distressed over some matter? Rather than talking to others in the congregation, why not respectfully approach the elders for help? Without being critical, explain how you have been affected. Always have “fellow feeling” for them, and maintain respect as you confide in them. (1 Peter 3:8) Do not resort to sarcasm, but trust in their Christian

maturity. Appreciate any Scriptural encouragement that they may kindly offer. And if it appears that other corrective measures are needed, have confidence that Jehovah will guide the elders to do what is good and right.—Galatians 6:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:13.

²⁰ However, there is yet another aspect to consider with regard to honoring and respecting those who are in authority. Should not those who are put in a position of authority respect the ones who are placed in their care? Let us examine that in the next article.

20. What are we going to consider in the next article?

“ALL YOU ARE BROTHERS”

“Do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, whereas all you are brothers.”—MATTHEW 23:8.

“WHO deserves more honor, a missionary or a Bethelite?”

a Christian woman in an Oriental country innocently asked a missionary from Australia. She wanted to know who should be respected more, a missionary from another country or a local minister serving in the branch office of the Watch Tower Society. That innocent question, reflecting a class-conscious culture, took the missionary by surprise.

The question of who is greater, however, stems from a desire to know where people stand in the ranks of power and influence.

² This concern is by no means new. Even Jesus’ disciples had an ongoing argument about who was the greatest. (Matthew 20:20-24; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 22:24-27) They too



1. What matter is worth our consideration?
2. How should we view our fellow worshippers?

came from a rather class-conscious culture, that of first-century Judaism. With such a society in mind, Jesus counseled his disciples: “Do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, whereas all you are brothers.” (Matthew 23:8) A religious title such as “Rabbi,” which means “Teacher,” “tends to engender pride and a sense of superiority in those who obtain it, and envy and a sense of inferiority in those who do not; and the whole spirit and tendency of it is contrary to the ‘simplicity that is in Christ,’ ” noted the Bible scholar Albert Barnes. Indeed, Christians refrain from addressing overseers among them as “Elder So-and-so,” using the word “elder” as a flattering title. (Job 32:21, 22) On the other hand, elders living up to the spirit of Jesus’ counsel honor other members of the congregation, just as Jehovah honors

loyal worshipers and Jesus Christ honors loyal followers.

The Example of Jehovah and of Jesus

³ Although Jehovah is the “Most High,” from the very beginning he honored his creatures by involving them in his works. (Psalm 83:18) When he created the first human, Jehovah included his only-begotten Son in the project as a “master worker.” (Proverbs 8:27-30; Genesis 1:26) Jehovah even invited his heavenly angels to express themselves about how to proceed with destroying wicked King Ahab when He had determined to do so. —1 Kings 22:19-23.

⁴ Jehovah reigns as the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. (Deuteronomy 3:24) He has no need to consult with humans. Yet, he stoops down, so to speak, to take note of them. A psalmist sang: “Who is like Jehovah our God, him who is making his dwelling on high? He is condescending to look on heaven and earth, raising up the lowly one from the very dust.” —Psalm 113:5-8.

⁵ Before annihilating Sodom and Gomorrah, Jehovah listened to Abraham’s questions and satisfied his sense of justice. (Genesis 18:23-33) Although Jehovah already knew the outcome of Abraham’s requests, he patiently listened to Abraham and accepted his reasoning.

⁶ Jehovah also listened to Habakkuk, who asked: “How long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help, and you do not hear?” Did Jehovah view the question as a challenge to his authority? No, he viewed Habakkuk’s queries as legitimate, and he thereupon revealed his purpose to raise up the Chaldeans to execute judgment. He assured the prophet that ‘this fore-

told judgment would without fail come true.’ (Habakkuk 1:1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14; 2:2, 3) By taking Habakkuk’s concerns seriously and answering him, Jehovah honored the prophet. As a result, the distraught prophet brightened up and became joyful, with full trust in the God of his salvation. This is reflected in the inspired book of Habakkuk that strengthens our trust in Jehovah today.—Habakkuk 3:18, 19.

⁷ Jesus Christ is another fine example of showing respect for others. Jesus had told his disciples that “whoever disowns me before men, I will also disown him before my Father.” (Matthew 10:32, 33) On the night of his betrayal, however, all his disciples deserted him, and the apostle Peter disowned him three times. (Matthew 26:34, 35, 69-75) Jesus looked beyond the outward appearance and took note of Peter’s innermost feelings, his profound repentance. (Luke 22:61, 62) Only 51 days later, Christ dignified the repentant apostle by letting him represent Jesus’ 120 disciples on the day of Pentecost and use the first of “the keys of the kingdom.” (Matthew 16:19; Acts 2:14-40) Peter was given a chance to ‘return and strengthen his brothers.’ —Luke 22:31-33.

Assigning Honor to Family Members

⁸ Husbands and parents do well to imitate Jehovah and Jesus Christ in exercising God-given authority. Peter admonished: “You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with [your wives] according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one.” (1 Peter 3:7) Imagine handling a delicate porcelain vessel, obviously more fragile than a wooden one. Would you not take greater care? A husband can do so by imitating Jehovah, listening to his wife’s opinions when

3. How did Jehovah honor his spirit creatures?

4, 5. How does Jehovah honor his human creatures?

6. What resulted from Jehovah’s showing honor when Habakkuk asked a question?

7. Why is Peter’s role at Pentecost 33 C.E. significant?

8, 9. In assigning honor to his wife, how can a husband imitate Jehovah and Jesus?

deciding family matters. Recall that Jehovah took time to reason with Abraham. Being imperfect, a husband may fail to see the whole scope of the matter. So would it not be wise for him to honor his wife by sincerely considering her opinion?

⁹ In lands where male authority is deeply entrenched, a husband must keep in mind that his wife may have to overcome a formidable barrier to express her innermost feelings. Imitate the way Jesus Christ dealt with his disciples, part of his future bride class, while he was on earth. He cherished them, taking into consideration their physical and spiritual limitations even before they voiced their needs. (Mark 6:31; John 16:12, 13; Ephesians 5:28-30) In addition, take time to observe what your wife is doing for you and your family, and express your appreciation in words and deeds. Both Jehovah and Jesus appreciated, commended, and blessed the worthy ones. (1 Kings 3:10-14; Job 42:12-15; Mark 12:41-44; John 12:3-8) After her husband became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, a Christian woman in the Orient said: "My husband used to walk three or four steps ahead of me, letting me carry everything. Now he carries the bags and shows appreciation for what I am doing at home!" A word of sincere appreciation goes a long way toward helping your wife to feel valued.—Proverbs 31:28.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Where Can You Find Inner Peace?

Good Examples
—Are You Benefiting From Them?

Christian Shepherds,
'Open Wide Your Heart'!

¹⁰ In dealing with their children, especially when reproof is needed, parents should imitate God's example. "Jehovah kept warning Israel and Judah" to turn back from their bad ways, but they "kept hardening their necks." (2 Kings 17:13-15) The Israelites even "tried to fool him with their mouth; and with their tongue they tried to lie to him." Many parents may feel that their children sometimes act like that. The Israelites "put God to the test" and pained him, making him feel hurt. Yet, Jehovah "was merciful; he would cover the error and not bring ruin."—Psalm 78:36-41.

¹¹ Jehovah even pleaded with the Israelites: "Come, now, you people, and let us set matters straight between us . . . Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet, they will be made white just like snow." (Isaiah 1:18) Although Jehovah was not in the wrong, he invited the rebellious nation to come and set matters straight. What a fine attitude for parents to imitate in dealing with their children! When the situation calls for it, dignify them by listening to their side of the story, and reason with them as to why they have to change.

¹² Of course, sometimes children need strong counsel. Parents would not want to be like Eli, who 'kept honoring his sons more than Jehovah.' (1 Samuel 2:29) Still, young ones need to see the loving motive behind the correction. They should be able to appreciate that their parents do love them. Paul admonishes fathers: "Do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) While paternal authority is assumed, the point being made is the father's

10, 11. What can parents learn from Jehovah's fine example in dealing with the rebellious nation of Israel?

12. (a) Why should we avoid honoring our children more than Jehovah? (b) What is required if we are to respect the dignity of our children when reproofing them?

need to have regard for the dignity of the children by not making them angry because of his excessive harshness. Yes, taking into consideration the dignity of children requires time and effort on the part of the parents, but the fruitage of doing so is worth all the sacrifices.

¹³ Showing honor to family members goes beyond dignifying one's wife and children. "When old, obey your children," says a Japanese proverb. The point of that proverb is that elderly parents should refrain from exceeding their parental authority and should take notice of what their grown children say. While it is Scriptural for parents to honor their children by giving them a hearing ear, the children should not display a disrespectful attitude toward older members of the family. "Do not despise your mother just because she has grown old," says Proverbs 23: 22. King Solomon lived up to this proverb and honored his mother when she approached him to make a petition. Solomon had a throne set to the right of his own and listened to what his elderly mother, Bath-sheba, had to tell him.—1 Kings 2:19, 20.

¹⁴ In our extended spiritual family, we are in a good position to "take the lead" in showing honor to the elderly members of the congregation. (Romans 12:10) They may not be able to do as much as they did in former days, and that may frustrate them. (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7) An elderly anointed Witness who was bedridden in an infirmary once expressed such frustration: "I can't wait till I die and return to work." For such elderly ones, our showing

due recognition and honor can help. The Israelites were commanded: "Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show consideration for the person of an old man." (Leviticus 19:32) Show consideration by making older

ones feel needed and appreciated. 'Rising up' may include sitting down and listening to them relate what they accomplished years ago. That will dignify the elderly and enrich our own spiritual life.

'In Showing Honor Take the Lead'

¹⁵ Congregation members thrive when the elders set a fine example for them. (1 Peter 5:2, 3)

Despite their busy schedule, caring elders take the initiative to approach the young ones, the family heads, the single mothers, the housewives, and the elderly, whether such ones are facing problems or not. The elders listen to what members of the congregation have to say and commend them for what they are able to do. An observant elder who makes appreciative comments about what a brother or sister does is imitating Jehovah, who appreciates his earthly creatures.

¹⁶ By imitating Jehovah, the elders set a fine example in applying Paul's admonition: "In brotherly love have tender affection for one another. In showing honor to one another take the lead." (Romans 12:10) This may be harder for elders who live in countries where class consciousness is the norm. For example, in one Oriental country, there are two words for "brother," one honorific and the other ordinary. Until recently, congregation members addressed elders and those who are older with

13. What is the Bible's view of the elderly in a family?

14. How can we honor the elderly members of the congregation?

15. What can elders do to dignify members of the congregation?

16. Why should we view elders as meriting honor along with others in the congregation?



the honorific term, using the ordinary term for others. However, they were encouraged to use the ordinary term at all times because, as Jesus told his followers, “all you are brothers.” (Matthew 23:8) Although the distinction may not be this obvious in other countries, we all need to be aware of the human tendency to make class distinctions.—James 2:4.

¹⁷ True, Paul encouraged us to treat certain elders as worthy of “double honor,” but they are still brothers. (1 Timothy 5:17) If we are able to “approach with freeness of speech to the throne of undeserved kindness” of the Universal Sovereign, should we not be able to approach the elders, who are to imitate Jehovah? (Hebrews 4:16; Ephesians 5:1) Overseers may weigh their own approachableness by considering how often others come to them to seek counsel or to make suggestions. Learn a lesson from the way Jehovah involves others in his projects. He dignifies others by delegating responsibilities. Even if some suggestions offered by another Witness may seem impractical, the elders ought to appreciate the concern shown. Remember how Jehovah treated Abraham’s probing questions and Habakkuk’s cry of distress.

¹⁸ Some fellow Christians do need readjustment. (Galatians 6:1) Still, they are valuable in Jehovah’s eyes, worthy of being treated with dignity. “When someone offering counsel treats me with respect, I feel free to approach him,” said one Witness. Most people respond well to counsel when they are treated with dignity. It may take more time, but hearing out those who have taken false steps makes it easier for them to accept any needed counsel. Keep in mind how Jehovah reasoned with the Israelites again and again out of compassion for them. (2 Chronicles 36:15; Titus 3:2)

17. (a) Why should elders be approachable? (b) In what ways can elders imitate Jehovah in dealing with congregation members?

18. How can elders imitate Jehovah in readjusting those who need help?

Counsel given with empathy and sympathy will touch the hearts of those needing help.—Proverbs 17:17; Philippians 2:2, 3; 1 Peter 3:8.

¹⁹ Our showing honor to others extends to those who may be in line to become our spiritual brothers in the future. Such people may be slow about accepting our message now, but we still need to be patient with them and recognize their dignity as humans. Jehovah “does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) Should we not have Jehovah’s view? Considering people in general, we can pave the way for giving a witness if we always try to be neighborly. Of course, we refrain from the kind of fellowship that may involve spiritual hazards. (1 Corinthians 15:33) Yet, we show “human kindness,” not despising people who do not believe as we do.—Acts 27:3.

²⁰ Yes, Jehovah and Jesus Christ count each one of us as worthy of respect. May we always remember how they act and similarly take the lead in showing honor to one another. And may we always keep in mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “All you are brothers.”—Matthew 23:8.

19. How should we view people who do not believe as do Christians?

20. What should the example of Jehovah and of Jesus Christ move us to do?

How Would You Answer?

- How should you view fellow worshippers?
- How does the example of Jehovah and of Jesus move you to honor others?
- How can husbands and parents honor others?
- Viewing fellow Christians as their brothers moves elders to act in what ways?

GILEAD'S 108TH CLASS URGED TO RENDER SACRED SERVICE



IN THE Bible, worship of God is often referred to by the expression "sacred service." It comes from a Greek term that refers to rendering service to God. (Romans 9:4) The 5,562 who listened to the graduation program of the 108th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead heard speakers provide practical counsel that would help the graduates render sacred service acceptable to Jehovah God.*

Theodore Jaracz, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, served as chairman. The program opened with song number 52, "Our Father's Name." The second stanza of that song declares: "We seek ways that we may also sanctify your matchless name." That truly expressed the heartfelt desire of the students of the graduating class (who were from 10 countries) to use their training in their missionary assignments, which would be in 17 different lands.

In his opening remarks, Brother Jaracz called attention to the students' five months of intensive Bible study that prepared them for service in foreign fields. This helped them to "make sure of all things," that is, to scrutinize in the light of God's Word what they previously learned, and to "hold fast to what is fine." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) He encouraged them to stick faithfully to Jehovah, his Word, and the assignments for which they were trained. What will help them as they do all of this?

Practical Advice for Rendering Sacred Service

Lon Schilling, a member of the Bethel Operations Committee, spoke on the subject "Will You Pass the Test of Reasonableness?" He highlighted the value of being reasonable, which reflects godly wisdom. (James 3:17) Reasonableness

involves being yielding, fair, moderate, considerate, and forbearing. "Reasonable people are balanced in dealing with others. They do not resort to extremes," Brother Schilling said. What can aid a missionary in being reasonable? Having a modest view of oneself, taking advantage of opportunities to listen and learn from others, and being willing to consider the views of others while not compromising godly principles.—1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

"Do Not Forget to Eat!" was the intriguing title of the

CLASS STATISTICS

Number of countries represented: 10

Number of countries assigned to: 17

Number of students: 46

Average age: 34

Average years in truth: 16

Average years in full-time ministry: 12

* The program on March 11, 2000, originated from the Watchtower Educational Center in Patterson, New York.



108th 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) Amadori, E.; Cook, O.; Byrne, M.; Lee, A. (2) Newsome, D.; Pederzolli, A.; Bigras, H.; Kato, T.; Gatewood, D. (3) Eade, D.; Eade, J.; Wells, S.; Jamison, J.; Gonzales, M.; Gonzales, J. (4) Kato, T.; Lohn, D.; Niklaus, Y.; Preiss, S.; Foster, P.; Ibarra, J. (5) Amadori, M.; Manning, M.; James, M.; Boström, A.; Gatewood, B.; Newsome, D. (6) Foster, B.; Jamison, R.; Hifinger, A.; Koffel, C.; Koffel, T.; Byrne, G. (7) Hifinger, K.; Manning, C.; Cook, J.; Boström, J.; Lohn, E.; Pederzolli, A. (8) James, A.; Wells, L.; Preiss, D.; Niklaus, E.; Lee, M.; Ibarra, P.; Bigras, Y.

next part on the program, presented by Samuel Herd, another member of the Governing Body. He highlighted the value of having a good spiritual diet in order to remain fit to render sacred service. "Your spiritual activity," Brother Herd said, "will soon be increased as you plunge into your assignment of preaching and teaching. Therefore, there is going to be a need for you to increase your intake of spiritual food in order to balance and level your strengths." A steady diet of spiritual food can help a missionary avoid spiritual depression and homesickness. It contributes to contentment and the resolve to stick to

one's assignment of sacred service.—Philippians 4:13.

One Gilead instructor, Lawrence Bowen, encouraged the graduating students to "Go Back to the Beginning." What did he mean? He had all in the audience turn to Proverbs 1:7, which states: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge." The speaker explained: "Anything that disregards the primal fact of Jehovah's existence can never really qualify as genuine knowledge nor result in proper understanding." Brother Bowen compared details of God's Word, the Bible, to pieces of a puzzle. When the pieces are

put together, a picture is formed. The more pieces, the bigger and clearer the picture becomes and the more appreciation a person develops. This can help all to render sacred service to God.

Wallace Liverance, Gilead School registrar, concluded the series of talks. His theme was "Offer Thanksgiving as Your Sacrifice to God." He called attention to the account of Jesus' healing ten lepers. (Luke 17:11-19) Only one turned back to praise God and express thanks to Jesus. "Undoubtedly, the others were thrilled to be clean. They felt good about themselves, but it seems that all they wanted was to be labeled clean by the priest," Brother Liverance commented. The spiritual cleansing that results from learning the truth, combined with thankfulness, should motivate one to express thanks to God for his goodness. The students of the 108th class of Gilead were encouraged to meditate on all of God's activities and goodness in order to make their service and sacrifices a reflection of thankfulness to God.—Psalm 50:14, 23; 116:12, 17.

Experiences and Interviews on How to Do It

Mark Noumair, another Gilead instructor, conducted the next portion of the program. It dealt with the field service experiences of the class during their training period. The students had spent, on an average, about 12 years in the full-time ministry before coming to Gilead. While at school, they started a good number of Bible studies with people of different backgrounds, showing that the students knew how to "become all things to people of all sorts."—1 Corinthians 9:22.

Following the student experiences, Charles Molohan and William Samuelson interviewed some Bethel family members and traveling overseers who had attended Gilead.

One of the brothers interviewed, Robert Pevy, served in the Philippines after graduation from the 51st class of Gilead. He reminded the class: "Whenever there is a problem, everybody gives his suggestions on how to solve the problem. There is always somebody smarter than you are, someone who is going to come up with a better idea. But if you look into the Bible and try to find God's view on things, no one is going to beat it. That's always going to be the right answer."

To round out the fine spiritual program, John Barr, a member of the Governing Body, spoke on the theme "Render Acceptable Sacred Service to Jehovah." He showed how sacred service can be reflected in the field ministry to help righthearted individuals worship God in an acceptable way. After turning to Jesus' words at Matthew 4:10, Brother Barr said, "If we are to worship Jehovah alone, we must shun all subtle forms of idolatry, such as covetousness, a desire for riches, and self-promotion. How happy it makes us to think that our missionaries down through the years since the early 1940's have established an excellent record in this regard! And we feel certain that you graduates of the 108th class of Gilead will follow their good example. You are going to render sacred service to Jehovah, who alone is worthy to receive it."

That was a positive climax to an upbuilding program. It was then time for hearing greetings from well-wishers around the world, for the presentation of the diplomas, and for the reading of a letter from the class, expressing appreciation for the training received. The graduating class was exhorted to manifest the quality of stick-to-itiveness in their assignments and in serving Jehovah. All in attendance, including guests from 25 countries, joined in ending the program with song and prayer.

Do You Believe in What You Cannot See?

WHEN someone says, 'I believe only in what I can see,' he is not speaking literally. Actually, we all believe in things that we cannot see.

For example, at school you may have performed an experiment designed to prove the existence of a magnetic field. It may go like this: Sprinkle iron filings on a sheet of paper. Then place the sheet over the magnet. When the sheet is vibrated, as if by magic the iron



filings bunch up near the magnet's poles and form into the pattern of the magnetic field. If you did that, could you actually see the magnetic field? No, but its *effect* on the iron filings is plain to see, giving you convincing proof that magnetism exists.

We accept without question other things that we cannot see. When we look at a beautiful painting or admire a fine sculpture, we do not doubt the existence of a painter or a sculptor. So when we contemplate a waterfall or gaze at a sunset, should we not be moved at least to consider the possibility that they are the work of a Great Artist or Sculptor?

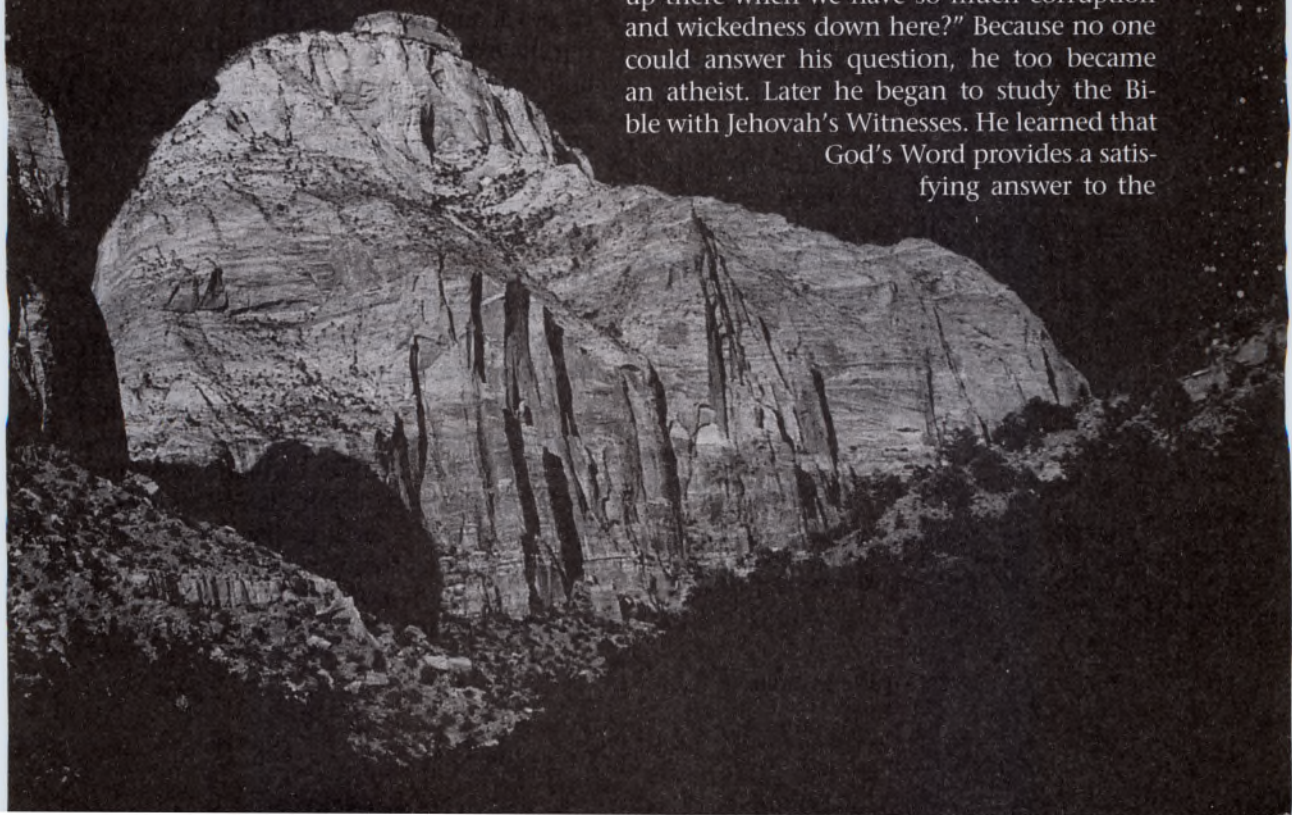
Why Some Do Not Believe

Ironically, some people have stopped believing in God because of what they were taught in church. This was true of a Norwegian man who was told that God burns the wicked in a fiery hell. The man just could not understand what kind of God would torment people in that way, so he became an atheist.

Later, however, the man agreed to investigate the Bible, assisted by one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He was amazed to learn that the Bible does not teach that the wicked are tortured in a fiery hell. The Bible likens death to sleep. In the grave, we feel no pain; we are conscious of nothing at all. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) The man also learned that those humans whom God judges to be incorrigibly wicked will remain in the grave forever. (Matthew 12: 31, 32) The rest of the dead will be resurrected in God's due time, with the prospect of obtaining everlasting life under Paradise conditions. (John 5:28, 29; 17:3) This explanation made sense. It harmonized with the Bible's statement that "God is love." (1 John 4:8) This sincere man continued his study of God's Word and, in time, came to love the God of the Bible.

Others reject the existence of a loving Creator because of the prevalence of distress and injustice. They agree with a Swedish man who once pointed to the heavens and asked: "How could there be an almighty, all-bountiful God up there when we have so much corruption and wickedness down here?" Because no one could answer his question, he too became an atheist. Later he began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. He learned that

God's Word provides a satisfying answer to the





J. Hester and P. Scowen (AZ State Univ.), NASA ▶



Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?

age-old question, Why does God permit wickedness?*

This sincere man learned that the existence of wickedness does not in itself prove that God does not exist. To illustrate: A man may design a knife to be used to carve meat. A customer may purchase the knife and use it, not to carve meat, but to commit murder. The fact that the knife was misused in no way disproves the existence of its maker. Similarly, the fact that the earth has not been used in harmony with its intended purpose does not mean that it did not have a Creator.

The Bible teaches that God's work is perfect. With him "there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) God gives good gifts to man, but some of the gifts have been misused, causing untold suffering. (James 1:17) God will bring an end to suffering, however. Thereafter, "the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, . . . and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:11, 29.

The Swedish man mentioned earlier was moved when he saw the suffering of fellow

humans. Really, his tender concern for others confirms the existence of God. How so?

For most people, the only alternative to belief in God is belief in evolution. Evolutionists teach "survival of the fittest"—that humans and animals compete within their kinds for survival. The fittest live; the weakest die. That is the natural order of things, they say. But if it is "natural" for the weak to die in order to make room for the strong, how can we explain the fact that, like the Swedish man, some strong humans are moved at the sight of the suffering

of their fellowman?

Getting to Know God

We cannot see God because he does not have a human form. Yet, God wants us to get to know him. One way we can become acquainted with him is by observing his extraordinary works—the "paintings" and "sculptures" of creation. At Romans 1:20, the Bible states: "[God's] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship." Yes, just as studying a painting or a sculpture can help you gain insight into the personality of the artist, meditating on God's marvelous works can help you become better acquainted with his personality.

Of course, we cannot answer all of life's nagging questions merely by looking at God's creative works. But we can find answers to such questions by searching God's Word, the Bible. It was by reading the Bible with an open mind that the two men mentioned earlier came to the conclusion that God exists and that he cares about what happens to us.

* For additional information on the reasons for God's permitting wickedness, please see the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?*, chapter 10, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Questions From Readers

Do Jehovah's Witnesses accept any medical products derived from blood?

The fundamental answer is that Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept blood. We firmly believe that God's law on blood is not open to reform to fit shifting opinions. Still, new issues arise because blood can now be processed into four primary components and fractions of those components. In deciding whether to accept such, a Christian should look beyond possible medical benefits and risks. His concern should be what the Bible says and the potential effect on his relationship with Almighty God.

The key issues are quite simple. As an aid to seeing why that is so, consider some Biblical, historical, and medical background.

Jehovah God told our common ancestor Noah that blood must be treated as something special. (Genesis 9:3, 4) Later, God's laws to Israel reflected the sacredness of blood: "As for any man of the house of Israel or some alien resident . . . who eats any sort of blood, I shall certainly set my face against the soul that is eating the blood." By rejecting God's law, an Israelite could contaminate others; thus, God added: "I shall indeed cut him off from among his people." (Leviticus 17:10) Later, at a meeting in Jerusalem, the apostles and older men decreed that we must 'abstain from blood.' Doing so is as vital as abstaining from sexual immorality and idolatry.—Acts 15:28, 29.

What would "abstaining" have meant back then? Christians did not consume blood, whether fresh or coagulated; nor did they eat meat from an unbled animal. Also ruled out would be foods to which blood was added, such as blood sausage. Taking in blood in any of those ways would violate God's law.—1 Samuel 14:32, 33.

Most people in ancient times would not have been troubled over the consuming of blood, as we can see from the writings of Tertullian (second and third centuries C.E.). Responding to false charges that Christians consumed blood, Tertullian mentioned tribes that sealed treaties

by tasting blood. He also noted that "when a show is given in the arena, [some] with greedy thirst have caught the fresh blood of the guilty . . . as a cure for their epilepsy."

Those practices (even if some Romans did them for health reasons) were wrong for Christians: "We do not include even animals' blood in our natural diet," wrote Tertullian. The Romans used food containing blood as a test of the integrity of real Christians. Tertullian added: "Now, I ask you, what sort of a thing is it, that when you are confident [that Christians] will turn with horror from animals' blood, you should suppose them greedy for human blood?"

Today, few people would think that the laws of Almighty God are at issue if a physician suggested their taking blood. While Jehovah's Witnesses certainly want to keep living, we are committed to obey Jehovah's law on blood. What does this mean in the light of current medical practice?

As transfusions of whole blood became common after World War II, Jehovah's Witnesses saw that this was contrary to God's law—and we still believe that. Yet, medicine has changed over time. Today, most transfusions are not of whole blood but of one of its primary components: (1) red cells; (2) white cells; (3) platelets; (4) plasma (serum), the fluid part. Depending on the condition of the patient, physicians might prescribe red cells, white cells, platelets, or plasma. Transfusing these major components allows a single unit of blood to be divided among more patients. Jehovah's Witnesses hold that accepting whole blood or any of those four primary components violates God's law. Significantly, keeping to this Bible-based position has protected them from many risks, including such diseases as hepatitis and AIDS that can be contracted from blood.

However, since blood can be processed beyond those primary components, questions arise about fractions derived from the primary blood components. How are such fractions used, and

what should a Christian consider when deciding on them?

Blood is complex. Even the plasma—which is 90 percent water—carries scores of hormones, inorganic salts, enzymes, and nutrients, including minerals and sugar. Plasma also carries such proteins as albumin, clotting factors, and antibodies to fight diseases. Technicians isolate and use many plasma proteins. For example, clotting factor VIII has been given to hemophiliacs, who bleed easily. Or if someone is exposed to certain diseases, doctors might prescribe injections of gamma globulin, extracted from the blood plasma of people who already had immunity. Other plasma proteins are used medically, but the above mentioned illustrate how a primary blood component (plasma) may be processed to obtain fractions.*

Just as blood plasma can be a source of various fractions, the other primary components (red cells, white cells, platelets) can be processed to isolate smaller parts. For example, white blood cells may be a source of interferons and interleukins, used to treat some viral infections and cancers. Platelets can be processed to extract a wound-healing factor. And other medicines are coming along that involve (at least initially) extracts from blood components. Such therapies are not transfusions of those primary components; they usually involve parts or fractions thereof. Should Christians accept these fractions in medical treatment? We cannot say. The Bible does not give details, so a Christian must make his own conscientious decision before God.

Some would refuse anything derived from blood (even fractions intended to provide temporary passive immunity). That is how they understand God's command to 'abstain from blood.' They reason that his law to Israel required that blood removed

* See "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of June 15, 1978, and October 1, 1994. Pharmaceutical firms have developed recombinant products that are not taken from blood and that may be prescribed in place of some blood fractions used in the past.

from a creature be 'poured out on the ground.' (Deuteronomy 12:22-24) Why is that relevant? Well, to prepare gamma globulin, blood-based clotting factors, and so on, requires that blood be collected and processed. Hence, some Christians reject such products, just as they reject transfusions of whole blood or of its four primary components. Their sincere, conscientious stand should be respected.

Other Christians decide differently. They too refuse transfusions of whole blood, red cells, white cells, platelets, or plasma. Yet, they might allow a physician to treat them with a fraction extracted from the primary components. Even here there may be differences. One Christian may accept a gamma globulin injection, but he may or may not agree to an injection containing something extracted from red or white cells. Overall, though, what might lead some Christians to conclude that they could accept blood fractions?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE DOCTOR

If you face surgery or a treatment that might involve a blood product, ask:

Do all the medical personnel involved know that, as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I direct that *no blood transfusions* (whole blood, red cells, white cells, platelets, or blood plasma) be given to me under any circumstances?

If any medicine to be prescribed may be made from blood plasma, red or white cells, or platelets, ask:

Has the medicine been made from one of the four primary blood components? If so, would you explain its makeup?

How much of this blood-derived medicine might be administered, and in what way?

If my conscience permits me to accept this fraction, what medical risks are there?

If my conscience moves me to decline this fraction, what other therapy might be used?

After I have considered this matter further, when may I inform you of my decision?

"Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1990, noted that plasma proteins (fractions) move from a pregnant woman's blood to the separate blood system of her fetus. Thus a mother passes immunoglobulins to her child, providing valuable immunity. Separately, as a fetus' red cells complete their normal life span, their oxygen-carrying portion is processed. Some of it becomes bilirubin, which crosses the placenta to the mother and is eliminated with her body wastes. Some Christians may conclude that since blood fractions can pass to another person in this natural setting, they could accept a blood fraction derived from blood plasma or cells.

Does the fact that opinions and conscientious decisions may differ mean that the issue is inconsequential? No. It is serious. Yet, there is a basic simplicity. The above material shows that Jehovah's Witnesses refuse transfusions of both whole blood and its primary blood components. The Bible directs Christians to 'abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from fornication.' (Acts 15:29) Beyond that,

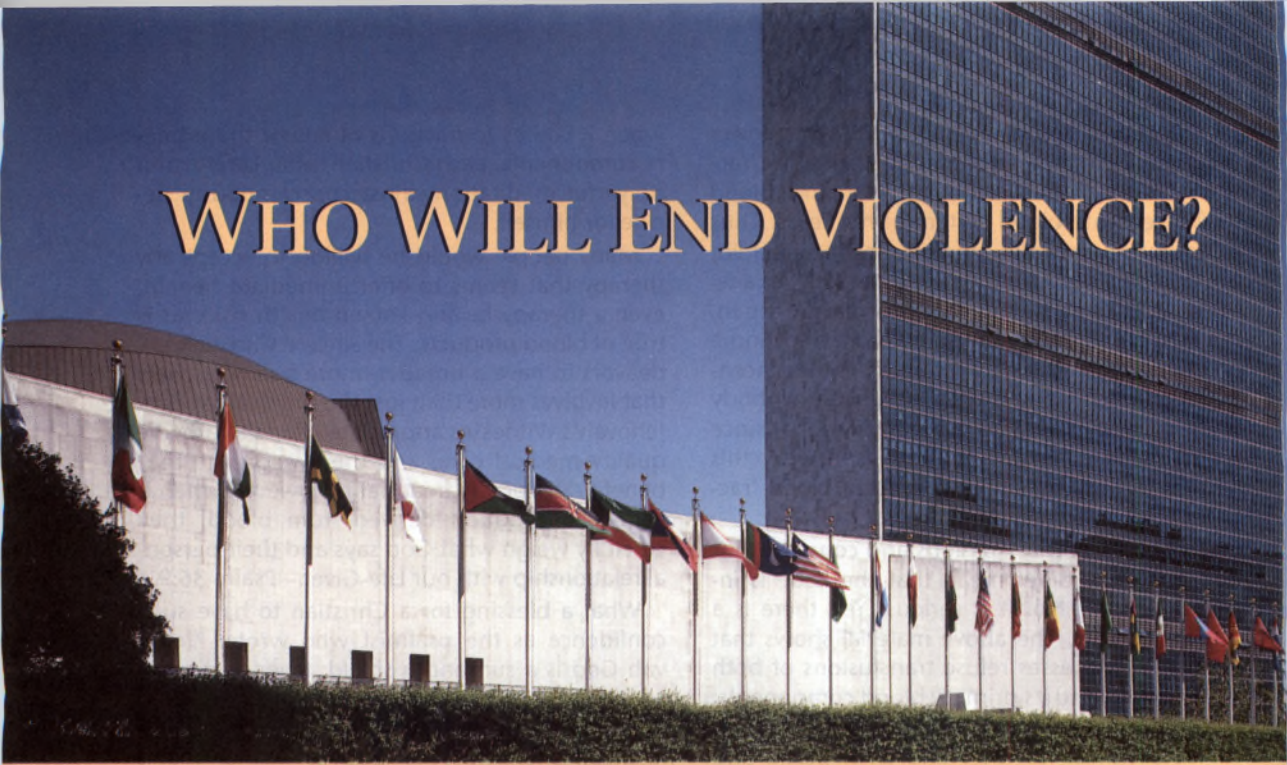
when it comes to fractions of any of the primary components, each Christian, after careful and prayerful meditation, must conscientiously decide for himself.

Many people would be willing to accept any therapy that seems to offer immediate benefit, even a therapy having known health risks, as is true of blood products. The sincere Christian endeavors to have a broader, more balanced view that involves more than just the physical aspects. Jehovah's Witnesses appreciate efforts to provide quality medical care, and they weigh the risk/benefit ratio of any treatment. However, when it comes to products derived from blood, they carefully weigh what God says and their personal relationship with our Life-Giver.—Psalm 36:9.

What a blessing for a Christian to have such confidence as the psalmist who wrote: "Jehovah God is a sun and a shield; favor and glory are what he gives. Jehovah himself will not hold back anything good from those walking in faultlessness. O Jehovah . . . , happy is the man that is trusting in you"!—Psalm 84:11, 12.



WHO WILL END VIOLENCE?



IN September 1999, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed delegates to the 54th annual session of the General Assembly. As reported in *The Toronto Star*, he issued a challenge to world leaders, stating: "There are a great number of peoples who need more than just words of sympathy from the international community. They need a real and sustained commitment to help end their cycles of violence, and launch them on a safe passage to prosperity."

Can the UN and its member nations provide the "real and sustained commitment" needed to end violence? Quoted in the same *Star* report, U.S. President Bill Clinton said: "After all the bloodshed of this century, we know it is easy to say 'never again,' but much harder to make it so." He added: "Promising too much can be as cruel as caring too little."

Over 2,500 years ago, the prophet Jeremiah said of human efforts: "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) What hope, then, is there for an end to violence?

As we read at Isaiah 60:18, God gave the assurance: "No more will violence be heard in your land, despoiling or breakdown within your boundaries." That prophecy had an initial fulfillment when God brought his exiled people back to their homeland. It also has a grander fulfillment that we can enjoy. Jehovah God is not "promising too much." As the Most High and the Creator of humankind, he is in the best position to end the "cycles of violence." Under God's Kingdom, peace will prevail. Violence will be gone forever!—Daniel 2:44.