

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white headscarf and a long white dress with a green shawl, is holding a large wicker basket filled with green and purple grapes. She is looking upwards and to the left with a thoughtful expression. The background is a dark, textured wall with some greenery on the left.

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

NOVEMBER 1, 2000

Is
**BIBLE
MORALITY**
Practical
TODAY?

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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"THAT sort of thing never used to happen," commented Helmut Schmidt, former chancellor of Germany. He was bemoaning recent cases of gross dishonesty by public officials that made the headlines. "Moral standards have been lost through greed," he said.

Many would agree with him. Moral values that are rooted in God's Word, the Bible, and that have long been widely accepted as a guide for what is right and what is wrong are being pushed aside. This is the case even in lands nominally associated with Christianity.

Moral Values on the Decline

Is Bible Morality Relevant?

Morality based on Bible teachings includes honesty and integrity. Yet, cheating, corruption, and fraud are widespread. *The Times* of London reports that some detectives "are alleged to have pocketed up to £100,000 a time to recycle drugs or lose evidence against major underworld figures." In Austria insurance fraud is said to be a common practice. And in Germany



the scientific community was aghast when researchers recently discovered “one of the most scandalous cases of fraud in German science.” A professor, a “star among German geneticists,” was accused of having falsified or invented data on a large scale.

Bible-based morality also includes faithfulness in marriage, which is meant to be a permanent relationship. But an increasing number of couples end up in divorce court. The Catholic newspaper *Christ in der Gegenwart* (The Contemporary Christian) reports that “even in ‘conservative’ Switzerland, more and more marriages are breaking up.” In the Netherlands, 33 percent of all marriages end in divorce. A lady who noted the social chang-

es in Germany in the past few years wrote of her concern: “Marriage is now regarded as old-fashioned and out-of-date. People no longer marry a partner for life.”

On the other hand, millions consider the moral standards taught in the Bible to be trustworthy and relevant to life in our modern world. A married couple living on the Swiss-German border discovered that learning to live according to Bible morals made them happier. As far as they are concerned, “there is only one guideline for all aspects of life. That guideline is the Bible.”

What do you think? Can the Bible serve as a valuable guideline? Is Bible-based morality practical today?



Is Bible Morality the Best?

“**S**OCIETY needs a framework of basic values that gives its members security and guidance.” So commented an experienced German writer and television broadcaster. Surely that makes sense. In order for human society to be stable and prosperous, the people must have a bedrock of commonly accepted standards that identify what is right or wrong, good or bad. The question is: What standards are the best, both for society and for its members?

If the moral values in the Bible are the standards adopted, they should help individuals to lead stable, happy lives. That, by extension,

would make a society of people who observe those values happier and more stable. Is that the case? Let us examine what the Bible has to say on two important issues: faithfulness in marriage and honesty in everyday life.

Stick to Your Mate

Our Creator created Adam and then made Eve to be his partner. Their union was the first marriage in history and was to be an enduring relationship. God said: “A man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife.” Some 4,000 years later, Jesus Christ repeated this marital standard for all of his fol-

lowers. Further, he condemned sexual relations outside of marriage.—Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:24; Matthew 5:27-30; 19:5.

According to the Bible, two important keys to a happy marriage are love and respect on the part of both partners. The husband, who is the head of the household, ought to show unselfish love by seeking his wife's best interests. He is to live with her "according to knowledge" and should not get "bitterly angry" with her. The wife is to treat her husband with "deep respect." If marriage mates follow these principles, most marital difficulties can be avoided or overcome. The husband will want to stick to his wife and the wife to her husband.—1 Peter 3:1-7; Colossians 3:18, 19; Ephesians 5:22-33.

Does the Bible standard of sticking faithfully to one's mate contribute to a happy marriage? Well, consider the results of a survey carried out in Germany. People were asked what factors are important for a good marriage. At the top of the list was mutual faithfulness. Would you not agree that married people are far happier when they know that their mates are faithful?

What if Problems Arise?

What, though, if a husband and wife have serious disagreements? What if their love fades? Is it not best under such circumstances to end the marriage? Or does the Bible standard of sticking faithfully to one's mate still make good sense?

Bible writers recognized that all married couples will have problems as a result of human imperfection. (1 Corinthians 7:28) Still, couples who observe the Bible's moral standards try to forgive and to work out their difficulties together. Of course, there are circumstances—such as adultery or physical abuse—when a Christian may appropriately consider separation or divorce. (Matthew 5:32; 19:9) But hasti-

ly ending a marriage without a very serious reason or in order to take another mate reveals a selfish disregard for others. It certainly does not bring stability or happiness to one's life. Let us take an example.

Peter sensed that his marriage had lost the sparkle it once had.* Hence, he left his wife and moved in with Monika, who had abandoned her husband. How did things work out? Within a few months, Peter admitted that living with Monika was "not quite so easy as I imagined it would be." Why not? Human failings were just as evident in his new partnership as they had been in the old one. To make matters worse, his hasty and selfish decision got him into serious financial problems. Furthermore, Monika's children were emotionally crushed by the radical change in their family life.

As this experience illustrates, when a marriage encounters rough weather, abandoning ship is rarely the answer. On the other hand, in the face of a storm, living by the moral values of God's Word, the Bible, can often keep a marriage afloat and bring it into calmer waters. This was the case with Thomas and Doris.

Thomas and Doris had been married for over 30 years when Thomas started to drink heavily. Doris plunged into depression, and the two of them discussed divorce. Doris confided in one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Witness showed Doris what the Bible says about marriage, encouraging her not to rush into separation but first to work with her husband to try to find a solution. That is what Doris did. Within a few months, divorce was no longer being considered. Thomas and Doris were working on their problems together. Following the Bible's counsel strengthened their marriage and gave them time to sort things out.

* The names in this article have been changed.

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Honesty in All Things

Sticking faithfully to a marriage mate demands strength of character and love of principle. The same qualities are required to remain honest in a dishonest world. The Bible has much to say about honesty. The apostle Paul wrote to first-century Christians in Judea: "We wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things." (Hebrews 13:18) What does that mean?

An honest person is truthful and free of fraud. He is fair in his dealings with others—straightforward, honorable, not deceptive or misleading. Moreover, an honest person is someone with integrity who does not cheat his fellowman. Honest people contribute to a climate of trust and confidence, which leads to healthy attitudes and promotes strong human relationships.

Are honest people happy? Well, they have reason to be. Despite widespread corruption and cheating—or maybe because of it—honest individuals are generally admired by others. According to a survey carried out among young people, honesty is a virtue that was highly rated by 70 percent of respondents. Furthermore, whatever our age, honesty is a prime requisite in those we regard as friends.

Christine was taught to steal from the time she was 12 years of age. Over the years she became a proficient pickpocket. "There were days when I brought home up to DM 5,000 [\$2,200, U.S.] in cash," she explains. But Christine was arrested several times, and she lived with the constant risk of being sent to prison. When Jehovah's Witnesses explained to her what the Bible says about honesty, Christine was attracted to the Bible's moral standards. She learned to obey the admonition: "Let the stealer steal no more."—Ephesians 4:28.

By the time Christine got baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, she was no longer a thief. She was endeavoring to be honest in all things,

since the Witnesses place great emphasis on honesty and other Christian qualities. The newspaper *Lausitzer Rundschau* reports: "Such moral terms as honesty, moderation, and love of neighbor are rated very highly in the faith of the Witnesses." How does Christine feel about the change in her life? "I am much happier now that I have stopped stealing. I feel that I am an honorable member of society."

All Society Benefits

People who are faithful to their mates and who are honest not only are happier themselves but are good for society in general. Employers prefer workers who do not cheat. We all like to have trustworthy neighbors, and we like to shop in stores run by upright businessmen. Do we not respect politicians, policemen, and judges who shun corruption? The community benefits greatly when its members behave honestly as a matter of principle, not just when it is expedient for them to do so.

Furthermore, faithful marriage mates are the basis of stable families. And most people would agree with the European politician who declared: "The [traditional] family remains to this day the most important haven of human security and purpose." The peaceful family unit is where adults and children have the best opportunity to feel emotionally secure. Those who are faithful in marriage are thus helping to build a stable society.

Think of how much everyone would benefit if there were no abandoned mates, divorce courts, or child-custody cases. And what if there were no more pickpockets, shoplifters, embezzlers, corrupt officials, or fraudulent scientists? Does that sound like a mere dream? Not to those who take a keen interest in the Bible and what it says about our future. God's Word promises that Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom will soon take over the governing of all hu-

Despite widespread corruption—or maybe because of it—honest people are generally admired by others

man society on earth. Under that Kingdom all its subjects will be taught to live in accordance with Bible morals. At that time, "the righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:29.

Bible Morality Is the Best Morality

Millions of people who have taken a close look at the Holy Scriptures have come to appreciate that Bible counsel is based on godly wisdom, which is far superior to human thinking. Such ones regard the Bible as trustworthy and relevant to life in our modern world. They

know that it is in their best interests to heed the counsel in God's Word.

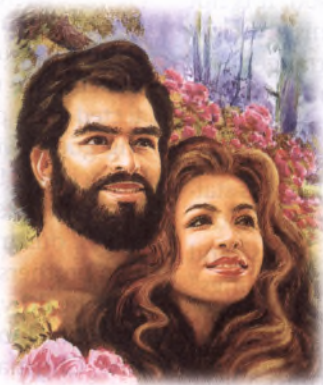
Hence, such individuals take to heart the Bible's counsel: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Doing so, they greatly improve their own lives, and they also benefit those around them. And they develop a firm confidence in "the life . . . which is to come," when Bible morality will be followed by all mankind.—1 Timothy 4:8.

A GODLY VIEW OF MORAL CLEANNES

"I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk."—ISAIAH 48:17.

TODAY, in many parts of the earth, moral conduct has come to be considered a personal matter. People view sexual relations as a natural expression of affection to be indulged in whenever they wish, not as something that should be limited to marriage. They feel that if nobody gets hurt, there is nothing wrong with deciding for oneself how to behave. In their view, people should not be judged in matters of morality, especially when it comes to sex.

² Those who have come to know Jehovah have a different view. They gladly follow Scriptural guidelines because they love Jehovah and



want to please him. They recognize that Jehovah loves them and gives direction that is for their good, direction that will truly benefit them and make them happy. (Isaiah 48:17) Since God is the Source of life, it is reasonable that they should look to him for guidance in how they use their bodies, especially in this matter that is so closely linked to the transmission of life.

A Gift From a Loving Creator

³ In contrast with today's secular world, some in Christendom have taught that sexual relations are shameful, sinful, and that the "original sin" in the garden of Eden was the

1, 2. (a) How do people in general view sexual morality? (b) What view of sexual morality do Christians have?

3. What have many in Christendom been taught about sexual relations, and how does that compare with what the Bible teaches?

sexual seduction of Adam by Eve. Such a view is contrary to what the inspired Scriptures say. The Bible record refers to the first human couple as "the man and his wife." (Genesis 2:25) God told them to have children, saying: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth." (Genesis 1:28) It would make no sense for God to command Adam and Eve to produce children and then punish them for carrying out those instructions.—Psalm 19:8.

⁴ In that command given to our first parents, which was repeated to Noah and his sons, we see the main purpose of sexual relations: to produce children. (Genesis 9:1) However, God's Word shows that his married servants are not obliged to limit sexual relations solely to efforts to produce children. Such relations can properly fill emotional and physical needs and be a source of pleasure to a married couple. It is a way for them to express deep affection for each other.—Genesis 26:8, 9; Proverbs 5:18, 19; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

Divine Restraints

⁵ While sexuality is a gift from God, it is not to be expressed without restraint. This principle applies even within the marriage arrangement. (Ephesians 5:28-30; 1 Peter 3:1, 7) Outside of marriage, sexual relations are forbidden. The Bible is quite specific on this matter. In the Law that God gave to the nation of Israel, it was stated: "You must not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14) Later, Jesus included "fornications" and "adulteries" with the "injurious reasonings" that originate in the heart and defile a person. (Mark 7:21, 22) The apostle Paul was inspired to admonish the Christians in Corinth: "Flee from fornication." (1 Corinthians 6:18) And in his letter to the Hebrews, Paul wrote: "Let marriage be honorable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers."—Hebrews 13:4.

4. Why did God give humans sexual powers?
5. What prohibitions has God placed on human sexual activity?

⁶ What is meant by the word "fornication"? It comes from the Greek word *por-nei'a*, which is sometimes used to apply to sexual relations between unmarried people. (1 Corinthians 6:9) Elsewhere, such as at Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, the term is broader in meaning and refers additionally to adultery, incest, and bestiality. Other sexual practices between individuals not married to each other, such as oral and anal sex and the sexual manipulation of another person's genitalia, can also be designated as *por-nei'a*. All such practices are condemned—either explicitly or by implication—in God's Word.—Leviticus 20:10, 13, 15, 16; Romans 1:24, 26, 27, 32.*

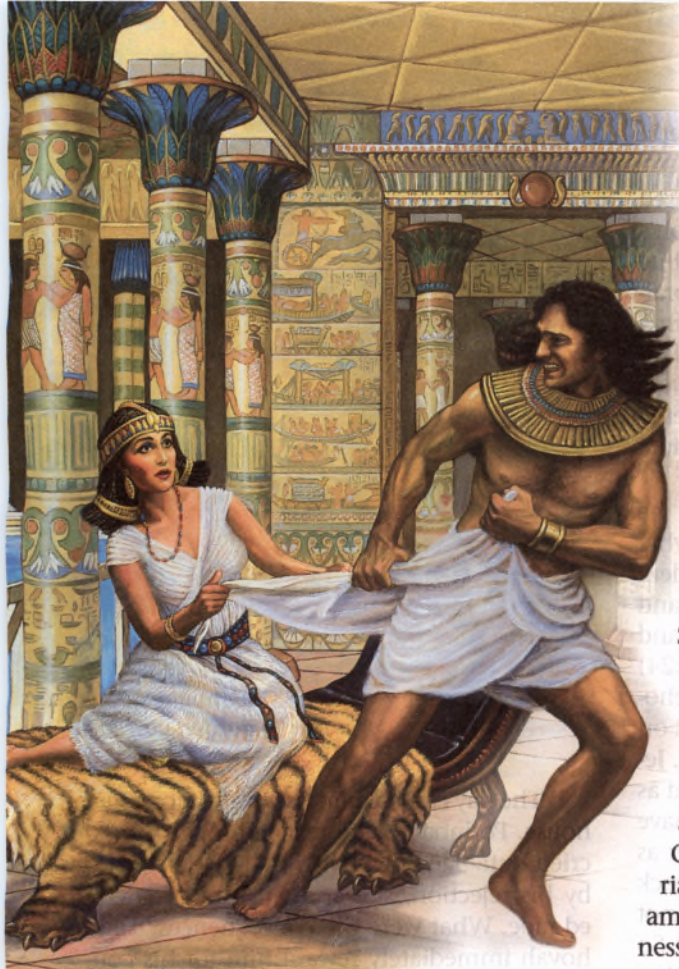
Benefiting From God's Moral Laws

⁷ To obey Jehovah's direction about sexual conduct can be a challenge for imperfect humans. The famous 12th-century Jewish philosopher Maimonides wrote: "No prohibition in all the Torah [Mosaic Law] is as difficult to keep as that of forbidden unions and illicit sexual relations." Yet, if we obey God's direction, we benefit greatly. (Isaiah 48:18) For example, obedience in this matter helps to protect us from sexually transmitted diseases, some of which have no cure and can kill.[#] We are protected from out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Applying godly wisdom also contributes to a clean conscience. Doing so promotes self-respect and earns the respect of others, including our relatives, our mates, our children, and our Christian brothers and sisters. It likewise promotes in us a healthy, positive attitude toward sex that will contribute to happiness in marriage. Wrote one Christian woman: "The truth of God's Word is the best protection there is. I am wait-

* See *The Watchtower*, March 15, 1983, pages 29-31.

[#] Sadly, there are situations in which an innocent Christian acquires a sexually transmitted disease from an unbelieving mate who has not followed God's direction.

6. In the Bible, what is covered by the word "fornication"?
7. How do we benefit by keeping morally clean?



Joseph fled from immorality

ing to be married, and when I am I'll be proud to tell the Christian man I marry that I've remained chaste."

⁸ By our maintaining chaste conduct, we can also do much to counter misconceptions about true worship and attract people to the God we worship. The apostle Peter wrote: "Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that, in the thing in which they are speaking against you as evildoers, they may as a result of your fine works of which they are eyewitnesses glorify God in the day for his inspection." (1 Peter 2: 12) Even if those who do not serve Jehovah fail

8. In what ways might our chaste conduct promote pure worship?

to recognize or approve of our chaste conduct, we can be certain that our heavenly Father sees, approves, and even rejoices in our efforts to follow his direction. —Proverbs 27:11; Hebrews 4:13.

⁹ Faith in God involves confidence that he knows what is best for us, even if we do not fully grasp all the reasons why he directs us in the way that he does. Consider an example from the Mosaic Law. One regulation regarding military encampments required that excrement be buried outside the camp. (Deuteronomy 23:13, 14) Perhaps the Israelites wondered about the reason for such direction; some may have thought it unnecessary. Since then, however, medical science has come to recognize that this law helped keep the water sources free from contamination and provided protection from many illnesses carried by insects. Similarly, there are spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and psychological reasons why God has limited sexual relations to the marriage bed. Let us now consider a few Bible examples of those who maintained moral cleanliness.

Joseph—Blessed for His Moral Conduct

¹⁰ Likely you are familiar with the Bible example of Joseph, the son of Jacob. At the age of 17, he found himself a slave belonging to Potiphar, chief of the bodyguard of Pharaoh of Egypt. Jehovah blessed Joseph, and in time he was appointed over all the house of Potiphar. By the time he reached his 20's, Joseph had become "beautiful in form and beautiful in appearance." He attracted the attention of Potiphar's wife, who tried to seduce him. Joseph made clear his position, explaining that to consent would be not only a betrayal of his master

9. Why should we have confidence in God's direction, though we may not fully grasp his reasons? Illustrate.

10. Who tried to seduce Joseph, and how did he reply?

but also a “sin against God.” Why did Joseph reason as he did?—Genesis 39:1-9.

¹¹ Evidently, Joseph’s decision was not based on fear of being found out by humans. Joseph’s family lived far away, and his father thought he was dead. If Joseph engaged in sexual immorality, his family would never know of it. Such a sin could probably also be concealed from Potiphar and his male servants, since there were times when they were not in the house. (Genesis 39:11) Yet, Joseph knew that such conduct could not be hidden from God.

¹² Joseph must have reasoned on what he knew about Jehovah. Doubtless he knew what Jehovah had proclaimed in the garden of Eden: “That is why a man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24) Further, Joseph was likely aware of what Jehovah had told a Philistine king who was bent on seducing Joseph’s great-grandmother Sarah. Jehovah told that king: “Here you are as good as dead because of the woman whom you have taken, since she is owned by another owner as his wife. . . . And I was also holding you back from sinning against me. That is why I did not allow you to touch her.” (Genesis 20:3, 6) So while Jehovah had not as yet provided a written law, his feelings about marriage were clear. Joseph’s moral sense, along with his desire to please Jehovah, made him reject immorality.

¹³ Potiphar’s wife, however, was persistent, imploring him “day after day” to lie with her. Why did Joseph not simply avoid her? Well, as a slave, he had duties to perform and could do little to change his situation. Archaeological evidence suggests that the design of Egyptian houses made it necessary to pass through the main part of the home to reach the storerooms. Hence, it may have been impossible for Joseph to avoid Potiphar’s wife.—Genesis 39:10.

11, 12. Though there was no divinely provided written law prohibiting fornication and adultery, why must Joseph have reasoned as he did?

13. Likely, why could Joseph not avoid Potiphar’s wife?



The Shulammite girl was like “a garden barred in”

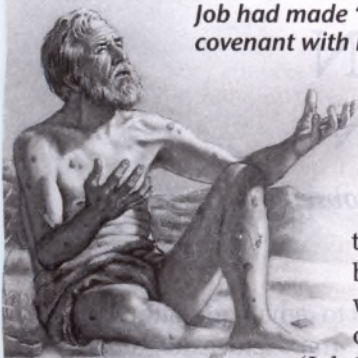
¹⁴ The day came when they were alone in the house. Potiphar’s wife reached for Joseph and cried out: “Lie down with me!” He fled. Stung by his rejection, she accused him of attempted rape. What were the consequences? Did Jehovah immediately reward him for his course of integrity? No. Joseph was thrown into prison and bound in fetters. (Genesis 39:12-20; Psalm 105:18) Jehovah saw the injustice and eventually elevated Joseph from a prison to a palace. He became the second most powerful person in Egypt and was blessed with a wife and children. (Genesis 41:14, 15, 39-45, 50-52) Further, the account of Joseph’s integrity was recorded 3,500 years ago for the consideration of God’s servants ever since. What wonderful blessings for adhering to God’s righteous laws! Similarly, we today may not always see the immediate benefits of maintaining moral integrity, but we can be assured that Jehovah sees and will bless us in due time.—2 Chronicles 16:9.

14. (a) What happened to Joseph after he fled from Potiphar’s wife? (b) How did Jehovah bless Joseph for his faithfulness?

Job's 'Covenant With His Eyes'

¹⁵ Another integrity keeper was Job. During the trials brought on him by the Devil, Job reviewed his life and declared himself willing to undergo severe punishment if he had violated, among other things, Jehovah's principle of sexual morality. Job said: "A covenant I have concluded with my eyes. So how could I show myself attentive to a virgin?" (Job 31:1) By this, Job meant that in his determination to keep integrity to God, he had resolved to avoid even gazing lustfully at a woman. Of course, he would see women in daily life and would likely help them if they needed assistance. But as to being attentive in the sense of pursuing romantic

Job had made 'a covenant with his eyes'



objectives, that was off-limits. Before his trials began, he had been a man of great wealth, "the greatest of all the Orientals."

(Job 1:3) He did not, how-

ever, use the power of wealth to attract many women. Clearly, he never toyed with the prospect of indulging in illicit sexual relations with younger women.

¹⁶ Thus, through good times as well as hard times, Job showed moral integrity. Jehovah observed this and blessed him richly. (Job 1:10; 42:12) What a fine example Job is for married Christians, both men and women! No wonder Jehovah loved him so! In contrast, the behavior of many today more closely resembles what

15. What was Job's 'covenant with his eyes'?

16. (a) Why is Job a fine example for married Christians? (b) How was the behavior of men in Malachi's day very different from that of Job, and what of today?

happened in Malachi's day. That prophet decried the way many husbands deserted their mates, often to marry younger women. Jehovah's altar was covered with the tears of abandoned wives, and God condemned those who thus "dealt treacherously" with their mates. —Malachi 2:13-16.

A Chaste Young Woman

¹⁷ A third integrity keeper was a Shulammitte maiden. Young and beautiful, she attracted the affections of not only a shepherd boy but also the wealthy king of Israel, Solomon. Throughout the beautiful story told in the Song of Solomon, the Shulammitte remained chaste, thus earning the respect of those around her. Solomon, though rejected by her, was inspired to record her story. The shepherd she loved also respected her chaste conduct. At one point he mused that the Shulammitte was like "a garden barred in." (Song of Solomon 4:12) In ancient Israel, beautiful gardens contained a delightful variety of vegetables, fragrant flowers, and stately trees. Such gardens were typically enclosed by a hedge or a wall and could be entered only through a locked gate. (Isaiah 5:5) To the shepherd, the Shulammitte's moral purity and loveliness were like such a garden of rare beauty. She was completely chaste. Her tender

17. How was the Shulammitte like "a garden barred in"?

Can You Explain?

- What does the Bible teach about sexual relations?
- What is covered by the word "fornication" in the Bible?
- How do we benefit by remaining morally clean?
- Why are Joseph, Job, and the Shulammitte maiden fine examples for Christians today?

affections would be available only to her future husband.

¹⁸ In moral integrity, the Shulammite set an excellent example for Christian women today. Jehovah saw and appreciated the virtue of the Shulammite girl and blessed her just as he blessed Joseph and Job. For our guidance, their acts of integrity are recorded in God's Word. While our efforts to keep integrity today are not recorded in the Bible, Jehovah has a "book of remembrance" for those seeking to do his will. Let us never forget that Jehovah is "paying at

18. Of what do the accounts of Joseph, Job, and the Shulammite remind us?

tention" and rejoices as we loyally strive to keep morally clean.—Malachi 3:16.

¹⁹ Although those without faith may scoff, we rejoice in our obedience to our loving Creator. We have a higher morality, a godly morality. It is something to be proud of, something to treasure. By maintaining a clean moral standing, we can delight in God's blessing and can maintain a bright hope of endless future blessings. In a practical sense, though, what can we do to remain morally clean? The next article will discuss this important question.

19. (a) How should we view moral cleanness?
(b) What will be discussed in the following article?

YOU CAN REMAIN MORALLY CLEAN

"This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments."—1 JOHN 5:3.

LONG ago, the prophet Malachi was inspired to foretell a time when the conduct of God's people would stand in dramatic contrast with that of people who do not serve God. The prophet wrote: "You people will again certainly see the distinction between a righteous one and a wicked one, between one serving God and one who has not served him." (Malachi 3:18) That prophecy is being fulfilled today. The keeping of God's commandments, including those requiring moral cleanness, is the wise and proper course in life. Yet, it is not always an easy course. For good reason, Jesus said that Christians must exert themselves vigorously to gain salvation.—Luke 13:23, 24.

1. What contrast in conduct is seen in people today?

² Why is it difficult to remain morally chaste? One reason is that there are external pressures. The entertainment industry portrays illicit sex as glamorous, pleasurable, and adult, while virtually ignoring its negative consequences. (Ephesians 4:17-19) Most of the intimate relations portrayed are between couples not married to each other. Often movies and television shows depict sexual relations in a context of casual, noncommitted relationships. Typically, warmth and mutual respect are lacking. Many have been exposed to such messages from childhood. Moreover, there is strong peer pressure to conform to today's liberal moral climate, and those who do not are sometimes mocked or even reviled.—1 Peter 4:4.

2. What external pressures make it difficult for some to remain morally chaste?



It is a protection to let others know where you stand on matters of morality

will of God." (Romans 12:2) Recognizing that moral chasteness is worthwhile involves more than simply knowing that immorality is condemned in God's Word. It involves understanding the reasons why immorality is condemned and how we benefit by shunning it. Some of these reasons were considered in the preceding article.

³ Internal pressure also makes it difficult to remain morally chaste. Jehovah created humans with sexual desires, and those desires can be strong. Desire has a lot to do with what we think, and immorality is linked to thinking that does not harmonize with Jehovah's thoughts. (James 1:14, 15) For example, according to a recent survey published in the *British Medical Journal*, many who engaged in sexual intercourse for the first time were merely curious to find out what sex was like. Others believed that most people their age were sexually active, so they too wanted to lose their virginity. Still others said that they got carried away by their feelings or were "a bit drunk at the time." If we want to be pleasing to God, we must reason differently. What sort of thinking will help us to maintain moral cleanness?

Build Strong Convictions

⁴ *To remain morally chaste, we must recognize that following such a life-style is worthwhile.* This is in harmony with what the apostle Paul wrote to Christians in Rome: "Prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect

5 Really, though, for Christians the most powerful reasons for avoiding sexual immorality are derived from our relationship with God. We have learned that he knows what is best for us. Our love for him will help us to hate what is bad. (Psalm 97:10) God is the Giver of "every good gift and every perfect present." (James 1:17) He loves us. By our obedience to him, we show that we love him and appreciate all that he has done for us. (1 John 5:3) Never do we want to cause Jehovah disappointment and pain by breaking his righteous commands. (Psalm 78:41) We do not desire to act in a manner that will cause his holy and righteous way of worship to be spoken of abusively. (Titus 2:5; 2 Peter 2:2) By remaining morally chaste, we make the Supreme One rejoice. —Proverbs 27:11.

⁶ *Once we have resolved to remain morally chaste, a further protection is to make that conviction known to others.* Let people know that you are a servant of Jehovah God and that you are determined to maintain his high standards. It is your life, your body, your choice. What is at stake? Your precious relationship with your

5. Primarily, why should Christians want to remain morally chaste?

6. How does it help to make known our moral standards to others?

3. What are some reasons why many in the world get involved in immorality?

4. To remain morally chaste, what must we do?

heavenly Father. So make it clear that your moral integrity is not negotiable. Be proud to represent God by upholding his principles. (Psalm 64:10) Never be ashamed to discuss your moral convictions with others. Speaking out can fortify you, protect you, and encourage others to follow your example.—1 Timothy 4:12.

⁷ Next, *having determined to maintain a high moral standard and having made our position known, we must take measures to stick to our determination.* One way to do this is to be careful when choosing friends. “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise,” states the Bible. Associate with those who share your moral values; they will strengthen you. This scripture also says: “But he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly.” (Proverbs 13:20) To the extent possible, avoid people who may weaken your resolve.—1 Corinthians 15:33.

⁸ Further, we need to feed our minds on things that are true, serious, righteous, chaste, lovable, well spoken of, virtuous, and praiseworthy. (Philippians 4:8) We do this by being selective in what we watch and read and in the music we listen to. To say that immoral literature does not exercise a corrupting influence is similar to saying that moral literature has no positive influence. Remember, imperfect humans can easily fall into immorality. So books, magazines, films, and music that encourage sexual feelings will lead to wrong desires, and these may eventually lead to sin. To maintain moral cleanness, we must fill our minds with godly wisdom.—James 3:17.

Steps That Lead to Immorality

⁹ Often, there are identifiable steps that lead to immorality. Each step taken makes it increasingly difficult to turn back. Notice how this is

7. How may we maintain our determination to remain morally chaste?

8. (a) Why should we feed our minds on wholesome things? (b) What should we avoid?

9-11. As recounted by Solomon, what steps progressively led a certain young man into immorality?

described at Proverbs 7:6-23. Solomon observes “a young man in want of heart,” or lacking good motive. The young man is “passing along on the street near her [a prostitute’s] corner, and in the way to her house he marches, in the twilight, in the evening of the day.” There is his first mistake. In the twilight hours, his “heart” has directed him, not to just any street, but to one where he knows a prostitute can usually be found.

¹⁰ Next we read: “Look! there was a woman to meet him, with the garment of a prostitute and cunning of heart.” Now he sees her! He could turn around and go home, but this is more difficult than before, especially since he is morally weak. She grabs hold of him and gives him a kiss. Having accepted a kiss, he now listens to her seductive persuasion: “Communion sacrifices were incumbent upon me,” she says. “Today I have paid my vows.” Communion sacrifices included meat, flour, oil, and wine. (Leviticus 19:5, 6; 22:21; Numbers 15:8-10) By mentioning them, she may have been hinting that she did not lack spirituality and, at the same time, may have been letting him know that there were plenty of good things to eat and drink at her house. “Do come,” she implores him, “let us drink our fill of love until the morning; do let us enjoy each other with love expressions.”

¹¹ The outcome is not hard to predict. “By the smoothness of her lips she seduces him.” He follows her home “like a bull that comes even to the slaughter” and “just as a bird hastens into the trap.” Solomon concludes with the sobering words: “He has not known that it involves his very soul.” His soul, or life, is involved because “God will judge fornicators and adulterers.” (Hebrews 13:4) What a powerful lesson for both men and women! We should avoid taking even the initial steps along a path that will lead to God’s disfavor.

¹² Note that the young man in the account

12. (a) What is meant by the expression “in want of heart”? (b) How can we build moral strength?

was “in want of heart.” This expression tells us that his thoughts, desires, affections, emotions, and goals in life were not in harmony with what God approves. His moral weakness led to tragic consequences. In these critical “last days,” it takes effort to build moral strength. (2 Timothy 3:1) God makes provision to help us. He provides meetings of the Christian congregation to encourage us along the right path and to bring us into contact with others who have the same goal that we do. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) There are congregation elders who shepherd us and teach us the ways of righteousness. (Ephesians 4:11, 12) We have God’s Word, the Bible, to direct and guide us. (2 Timothy 3:16) And at all times, we have the opportunity to pray for God’s spirit to help us.—Matthew 26:41.

Learning From the Sins of David

¹³ Sadly, though, even outstanding servants of God have become involved in sexual immorality. One such person was King David, who for decades had served Jehovah faithfully. There is no doubt that he loved God intensely. Yet, he plunged into a course of sin. As with the young man whom Solomon described, there were steps that led to David’s sin and then compounded it.

¹⁴ David was then middle-aged, possibly in his early 50’s. From his rooftop, he saw beautiful Bath-sheba bathing herself. He inquired about her and learned who she was. He discovered that her husband, Uriah, was engaged in the siege of Rabbah, an Ammonite city. David had her brought to his palace and had relations with her. Later, things became complicated—she found that she was pregnant by David. Hoping that Uriah would spend the night with his wife, David summoned him back from the war. That way, Uriah would have appeared to be the father of Bath-sheba’s

child. But Uriah did not go to his home. Desperate to cover his sin, David then sent Uriah back to Rabbah with a letter to the chief of the army saying that Uriah should be put in a position where he would be killed. Uriah thus lost his life, and David married the widow before it became public knowledge that she was pregnant.—2 Samuel 11:1-27.

¹⁵ Seemingly, David’s scheme to cover up his sin had worked. Months passed. The child—a son—was born. If David had this incident in mind when he composed Psalm 32, then clearly his conscience tormented him. (Psalm 32:3-5) However, the sin was not hidden from God. The Bible says: “The thing that David had done appeared bad in the eyes of Jehovah.” (2 Samuel 11:27) Jehovah sent the prophet Nathan, who skillfully confronted David with what he had done. David immediately confessed and begged Jehovah’s forgiveness. His genuine repentance brought reconciliation with God. (2 Samuel 12:1-13) David did not resent the reproof. Rather, he showed the attitude described at Psalm 141:5: “Should the righteous one strike me, it would be a loving-kindness; and should he reprove me, it would be oil upon the head, which my head would not want to refuse.”

¹⁶ Solomon, who was the second son of David and Bath-sheba, may have reflected on this dark episode in his father’s life. He later wrote: “He that is covering over his transgressions will not succeed, but he that is confessing and leaving them will be shown mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13) If we fall into serious sin, we should heed this inspired counsel, which is both a warning and a word of advice. We should confess to Jehovah and approach the congregation elders for help. An important responsibility of the elders is to help readjust those who have fallen into wrongdoing.—James 5:14, 15.

15. (a) How was David’s sin exposed? (b) How did David react to Nathan’s skillful reproof?

16. What warning and counsel did Solomon give concerning transgressions?

13, 14. How did King David become involved in gross sin?

Enduring the Consequences of Sin

¹⁷ Jehovah forgave David. Why? Because David was a man of integrity, because he was merciful to others, and because his repentance was genuine. Nevertheless, David was not shielded from the disastrous consequences that followed. (2 Samuel 12:9-14) The same is true today. Although Jehovah does not bring evil upon repentant ones, he does not spare them from the natural consequences of their wrong actions. (Galatians 6:7) Among the results of sexual immorality may be divorce, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, and the loss of trust and respect.

¹⁸ If we personally have erred seriously, it is easy to feel disheartened while suffering the consequences of the mistakes we have made. Nevertheless, we should let nothing hold us back from repenting and becoming reconciled to God. During the first century, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they should remove from the congregation a man who was practicing incestuous fornication. (1 Corinthians 5:1, 13) After the man genuinely repented, Paul instructed the congregation: "Kindly

17. Though Jehovah forgives sins, from what does he not shield us?

18. (a) How did Paul tell the Corinthian congregation to deal with a case of gross sexual misconduct? (b) How does Jehovah show love and mercy toward sinners?

Can You Explain?

- Why can it be difficult to remain morally clean?
- What are some ways to support our determination to follow high moral standards?
- What lessons can we learn from the sins of the young man mentioned by Solomon?
- What does David's example teach us about repentance?

forgive and comfort him [and] confirm your love for him." (2 Corinthians 2:5-8) In this inspired counsel, we see Jehovah's love and mercy toward repentant sinners. Angels in heaven rejoice when a sinner repents. —Luke 15:10.

¹⁹ Though saddened by a wrong course, the regret we feel can help us to 'be on our guard that we do not turn again to what is hurtful.' (Job 36:21) Indeed, the bitter consequences of sin should deter us from repeating a wrong. Moreover, David used the sad experience gained from his sinful conduct to counsel others. He said: "I will teach transgressors your ways, that sinners themselves may turn right back to you." —Psalm 51:13.

Happiness Comes From Serving Jehovah

²⁰ "Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!" said Jesus. (Luke 11:28) Obedience to God's righteous requirements brings happiness now and into the endless future. If we have remained morally clean, may we continue in that course by taking advantage of all the provisions that Jehovah has made to assist us. If we have fallen into immorality, let us take heart from the knowledge that Jehovah is ready to forgive those who truly repent, and let us be determined never to repeat the sin. —Isaiah 55:7.

19. Being properly saddened by a wrong course may lead to what benefits?

20. What benefits result from obeying God's righteous requirements?

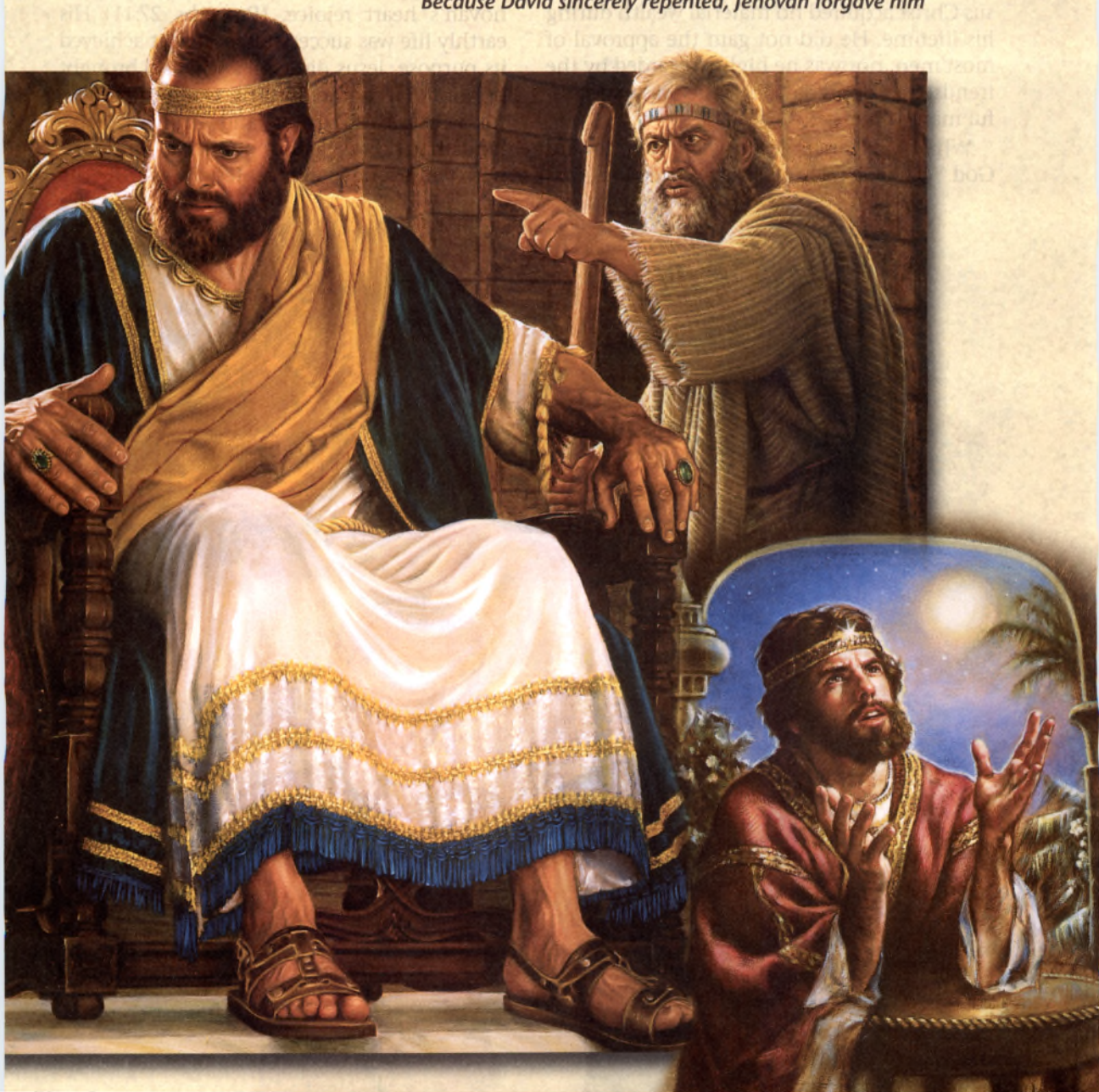


²¹ Soon this unrighteous world will pass away, along with all its immoral attitudes and practices. By maintaining moral chasteness, we will be benefited now and forever. The apostle Peter wrote: “Beloved ones, since you

21. Applying what admonition from the apostle Peter can help us to remain morally clean?

are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace. . . . Having this advance knowledge, be on your guard that you may not be led away with them by the error of the law-defying people and fall from your own steadfastness.”—2 Peter 3:14, 17.

Because David sincerely repented, Jehovah forgave him



How Do You MEASURE SUCCESS?

ONE dictionary defines success as "the attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence." Is that a complete definition? Are wealth, favor, or eminence the only measures of success? Before you answer, consider this: Jesus Christ acquired no material wealth during his lifetime. He did not gain the approval of most men; nor was he highly regarded by the trendsetters of his day. Yet, Jesus was a successful man. Why?

While on earth, Jesus was "rich toward God." (Luke 12:21) After his resurrection, God

rewarded him by crowning him "with glory and honor." Jehovah exalted his Son "to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name." (Hebrews 2:9; Philippians 2:9) Jesus' life course made Jehovah's heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) His earthly life was successful because it achieved its purpose. Jesus did God's will and brought honor to His name. In turn, God honored Jesus with wealth, favor, and eminence of a kind that no academic, politician, or sports hero will ever experience. Jesus was truly the



most successful man who ever walked the earth.

Christian parents realize that if their young ones follow in Christ's footsteps, becoming rich toward God in the sense that Jesus was, they will reap rich blessings now and enjoy unimaginable rewards in the coming system of things. There is no better way for a young person to follow in Christ's footsteps than to do the work that Jesus did—by engaging in the full-time ministry if that is possible.

In some cultures, however, the prevailing custom is for young people not to take up the full-time ministry. When a young man finishes his schooling, he may be expected to obtain full-time employment, get married, and settle down. At times, young people from such backgrounds mistakenly hold back from entering the full-time ministry. (Proverbs 3: 27) Why? Because of pressure, they conform to prevailing cultural standards. That is what happened to Robert.*

When Culture and Conscience Clash

Robert was raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. In his teenage years, his conduct and choice of associates left much to be desired. His mother began to worry about him. Therefore, she asked a pioneer, a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, to encourage him. Robert explains what happened next.

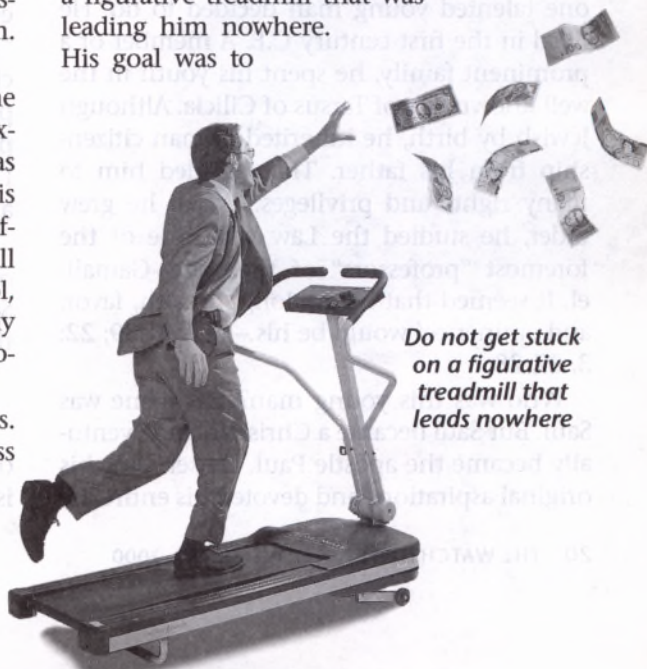
"I really appreciated the interest that the pioneer brother showed in me. His good example made me want to take up pioneering as a career as soon as I finished school. That is when Mum got worried again—but for a different reason. You see, in our culture it is all *right* for a girl to pioneer straight from school, but a boy is expected to become financially secure first, and then he can think about pioneering.

"I got a trade and started my own business. Soon I was deeply involved in the business

and was just going through the routine of attending meetings and preaching. My conscience bothered me—I knew I could serve Jehovah more fully. Nonetheless, it was a *real struggle* to break free from what others expected of me, but I am happy I did. I am married now, and my wife and I have been pioneers for the past two years. Recently, I was appointed as a ministerial servant in the congregation. I can honestly say that I now feel real contentment serving Jehovah with all my heart, to my full potential."

This magazine has repeatedly encouraged young ones to learn a trade or develop some useful qualifications—while still in school if possible. To what end? To become wealthy? No. The primary reason is so that they will be able to support themselves properly as adults and serve Jehovah as fully as they can, especially in the full-time ministry. It has often happened, though, that young men and women get so caught up in pursuing a secular career that the ministry diminishes in importance. Some do not give any thought to taking up the full-time service. Why not?

Robert's comments shed some light on the subject. Once he had learned his trade, Robert started a business. Soon, he was on a figurative treadmill that was leading him nowhere. His goal was to



**Do not get stuck
on a figurative
treadmill that
leads nowhere**

* Names have been changed.

become financially secure. But does anyone inside or outside the Christian congregation ever fully attain that goal? Christians should strive to be financially *responsible*, diligently looking after their financial obligations; but they should also realize that in these uncertain times, few ever reach a point where they can really consider themselves financially *secure*. That is why Jesus' promise recorded at Matthew 6:33 is so comforting to Christians.

Robert is happy that he decided to follow the desires of his heart rather than the dictates of his culture. Today, he is enjoying a career in full-time service. Yes, the full-time ministry is an honorable career. Robert is at peace with himself because he is serving Jehovah, as he says, 'to his full potential.'

Make the Most of Your Talents

There are many gifted people among Jehovah's Witnesses. Some have outstanding intellectual abilities; others are talented in manual activities. All these gifts come from Jehovah, who gives "to all persons life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:25) Without life, these gifts would be of no value.

It is only proper, then, that we use our dedicated lives in Jehovah's service. That is what one talented young man decided to do. He lived in the first century C.E. A member of a prominent family, he spent his youth in the well-known city of Tarsus of Cilicia. Although Jewish by birth, he inherited Roman citizenship from his father. That entitled him to many rights and privileges. When he grew older, he studied the Law with one of the foremost "professors" of the time—Gamaliel. It seemed that before long, 'wealth, favor, and eminence' would be his.—Acts 21:39; 22:3, 27, 28.

Who was this young man? His name was Saul. But Saul became a Christian and eventually became the apostle Paul. He set aside his original aspirations and devoted his entire life

to Jehovah's service as a Christian. Paul became known, not as a distinguished lawyer, but as a zealous preacher of the good news. After spending almost 30 years as a missionary, Paul wrote a letter to friends in Philippi. In it he reviewed some of his past accomplishments before he became a Christian, and then he said: "On account of [Jesus Christ] I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ." (Philippians 3:8) No, Paul did not regret the way he had used his life!

What about the training Paul received from Gamaliel? Was it ever useful to him? Yes! On several occasions he contributed to "the defending and legally establishing of the good news." But Paul's main work was being a preacher of the good news—something his earlier schooling could never have taught him.—Philippians 1:7; Acts 26:24, 25.

Similarly today, some have been able to use their gifts and talents and even their education to further Kingdom interests. Amy, for instance, holds a university degree in commerce and another in law. She once had a lucrative job with a law firm, but today she serves as an unpaid volunteer minister in one of the Watch Tower Society's branch offices. Here is how Amy describes her life now: "I believe that I have made the best possible choice in life. . . . I have no desire to change places with any of my university peers. I am proud of my chosen course. I have everything I need and want—a contented, happy life and a career that is fulfilling and satisfying."

Amy chose a course that brought her peace of mind, satisfaction, and Jehovah's blessing. Surely Christian parents want nothing less for their children!

Success in the Christian Ministry

Of course, it is vital to have the proper view of success in the Christian ministry itself. It is not hard to feel successful when we have

spent an enjoyable time in the field ministry, placing Bible literature or engaging householders in stimulating Bible discussions. But if we seldom find a hearing ear, we might be tempted to conclude that we are wasting our time. Remember, though, that one of the definitions of success is 'the attainment of favor.' Whose favor do we wish to gain? Jehovah's, of course. This we can receive whether people listen to our message or not. Jesus taught his disciples a powerful lesson in this regard.

You will recall that Jesus dispatched 70 Kingdom preachers "into every city and place to which he himself was going to come." (Luke 10:1) They were to preach in the towns and villages unaccompanied by Jesus. This was a new experience for them. Hence, Jesus gave them detailed instructions before sending them out. When they met "a friend of peace," they were to give him a thorough witness concerning the Kingdom. However, when they were rebuffed, they were to go on their way, unconcerned. Jesus explained that those who refused to listen to them were really rejecting Jehovah himself.—Luke 10:4-7, 16.

When the 70 completed their preaching assignment, they reported back to Jesus "with joy, saying: 'Lord, even the demons are made subject to us by the use of your name.'" (Luke 10:17) It must have been exciting for those imperfect men to expel powerful spirit creatures! However, Jesus cautioned his enthusiastic disciples: "Do not rejoice over this, that the spirits are made subject to you, but rejoice *because your names have been inscribed in the heavens.*" (Luke 10:20) The 70 might not always have the power to expel demons, nor would they always experience positive results in the ministry. But if they remained faithful, they would always have Jehovah's approval.

Do You Appreciate Full-Time Servants?

A young man once told a Christian elder: "When I graduate from high school, I will try

to find a job. If I cannot find a job, then I will consider entering some form of full-time service." That, however, is not the viewpoint of most who have taken up the pioneer ministry. In order to pioneer, some have given up opportunities to pursue lucrative careers. Others have turned down exciting educational opportunities. Like the apostle Paul, they have made sacrifices, but like Paul, Robert, and Amy, they do not regret the choices they made. They appreciate their privilege of using their gifts to praise Jehovah, who is worthy of the best they can offer.

For various reasons, many faithful Witnesses of Jehovah are not in a position to pioneer. Perhaps they have Scriptural obligations to care for. Still, if they are serving God with their whole 'heart, soul, and mind,' Jehovah is pleased with them. (Matthew 22:37) Although unable to pioneer themselves, they recognize that those who do pioneer have chosen a fine career.

The apostle Paul wrote: "Quit being fashioned after this system of things." (Romans 12:2) In harmony with Paul's counsel, we must not allow the cultural or secular standards of this system to shape our thinking. Whether you can pioneer or not, make Jehovah's service the focus of your life. You will be successful as long as you have Jehovah's approval.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Does Praying Do Any Good?

Christians Find Happiness in Serving

Serve God With a Willing Spirit



“O FOR A FAITH THAT WILL NOT SHRINK”!

AS TOLD BY
HERBERT MÜLLER

A few months after Hitler's army invaded the Netherlands, Jehovah's Witnesses were banned. Before long, my name appeared on the Nazis' most-wanted list, and I was hunted like an animal.

ONCE, I was so worn out from hiding and running that I told my wife that it might even be a relief to be caught by the army. Then the words of a song came to mind: “O for a faith that will not shrink, tho’ pressed by ev’ry foe.”* Reflecting on that song renewed my strength and brought back memories of my parents in Germany and of the day my friends had sung this song to bid me farewell. May I share some of these memories with you?

My Parents' Example

When I was born in 1913 in the town of Copitz in Germany, my parents were members

of the Evangelical Church.* Seven years later, in 1920, father left the church. On April 6, he asked for a *Kirchenaustrittsbescheinigung* (Declaration of Withdrawal From the Church). The town's civil registration officer filled one out. A week later, however, father was back in the office explaining that the declaration did not list the name of his daughter. The officer filled out a second document stating that the church withdrawal also applied to Martha Margaretha Müller. At that time, Margaretha, my sister, was a year and a half old. When it came to serving Jehovah, father would not settle for half measures!

* Song 194.—*Songs of Praise to Jehovah* (1928).

* The town of Copitz, now called Pirna, is located along the Elbe River, 11 miles from the city of Dresden.

The "Jugendgruppe" during a break after field service



That same year, my parents were baptized by the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. Father raised us children in a strict manner, but his loyalty to Jehovah made it easier for us to accept his guidance. Loyalty also moved my parents to make adjustments. For instance, there was a time when we were not allowed to play outdoors on Sundays. One Sunday in 1925, however, our parents told us that we were going out for a walk. We took some snacks along and had a pleasant time—what a change from being penned up in the house all day! Father said that he had learned some points at a recent convention that had corrected his view of Sunday activities. At other times, he also showed the same willingness to adjust.

Though my parents' health was poor, they did not hold back from the preaching work. To distribute the tract *Ecclesiastics Indicted*, for example, we boarded a train one evening with the rest of the congregation and traveled to the town of Regensburg, some 200 miles from Dresden. The next day, we distributed the tracts throughout the town, and when finished, we took the train back. By the time we were home again, nearly 24 hours had passed.

Leaving Home

My association with the *Jugendgruppe* (Youth Group) in our congregation also helped me to grow spiritually. Each week, young ones over 14 years of age met with some of the congregation's older brothers. We played games and musical instruments, studied the Bible, and talked about creation and science. How-

ever, in 1932, when I was 19 years old, my association with the group came to an end.

In April of that year, Father received a letter from the Watch Tower Society's office in Magdeburg. The Society was looking for someone who could drive a car and wanted to pioneer. I knew it was my parents' desire that I pioneer, but I felt that I could not. Since my parents were poor, I had begun repairing bicycles and sewing machines, as well as typewriters and other office equipment, at age 14. How could I leave my family? They needed my support. Moreover, I was not even baptized. Father sat down with me and asked me some questions to see if I understood what was involved in baptism. When my answers convinced him that I had made enough spiritual progress to be baptized, he said: "You should offer yourself for this assignment." I did.

One week later I received an invitation to come to Magdeburg. When I told my friends in the Youth Group, they wanted to send me off with a cheerful song. They were surprised at the song I chose because they considered it to be very serious. Still, some grabbed their violins, mandolins, and guitars and all sang: "O for a faith that will not shrink, tho' pressed by ev'ry foe; that will not tremble on the brink



Fellow pioneers and I covered the territory of Schneifel. I was 20 years old

of any earthly woe." That day, I did not realize how often those words would strengthen me in the years to come.

A Turbulent Start

After the brothers in Magdeburg had tested my driving skills, they entrusted me and four other pioneers with a car, and we headed for the Schneifel, a region near Belgium. We soon learned that our car was a necessity. The Catholic Church in that region resented our presence, and the villagers, urged on by priests, often waited to chase us away. Many a time, the car helped us to stay just ahead of their hoes and pitchforks.

After the Memorial in 1933, the regional overseer, Paul Grossmann, told us that the Society's work in Germany had been banned. Shortly thereafter, the branch office asked me to come with the car to Magdeburg, pick up literature there, and transport it to the state of Saxony, some 70 miles from Magdeburg. By the time I reached Magdeburg, however, the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police) had already shut down the Society's office. I left the car with a brother in Leipzig and returned home—but not for long.

The Society's office in Switzerland invited me to begin pioneering in the Netherlands. I planned to leave within a week or two. Father advised me, however, to get moving right away. I took his advice, and within a few hours, I left home. The next day, the police

came to my father's home to arrest me on the charge of desertion. They were too late.

Starting Out in the Netherlands

On August 15, 1933, I arrived at a pioneer home in Heemstede, a town 15 miles from Amsterdam. The next day, I went out to preach without knowing a word of Dutch. Armed with a testimony card, which contained a printed sermon, I began. What an encouragement it was when a Catholic woman accepted the book *Reconciliation!* That same day, I also placed 27 booklets. At the end of that first day, I felt elated to be able to preach in freedom again.

In those days, pioneers had no other source of income than the contributions received when literature was placed. That money was used to buy food and other necessities. If a little money was left at the end of the month, it was divided among the pioneers for personal expenses. We had little materially, but Jehovah provided for us so well that in 1934, I was able to attend a convention in Switzerland.

A Faithful Companion

At the convention, I saw 18-year-old Erika Finke. I knew her from when I was living at home. She was a friend of my sister, Margaretha, and I had always been impressed by Erika's firm stand for the truth. Not long after her baptism in 1932, someone informed the Gestapo that Erika had refused to say "Heil Hitler!" The Gestapo went after her and demanded to know why she had refused. Erika read Acts 17:3 to the officer in the police station and explained that God has appointed only one man as Savior, Jesus Christ. "Are there others who believe like you?" the officer demanded to know. Erika refused to give any names. When the policeman threatened to detain her, Erika told him

With Erika and Wolfgang in 1940

that she would rather die than give names. He stared at her and shouted: "Get out of here. Go home. Heil Hitler!"

After the convention, I returned to the Netherlands while Erika stayed in Switzerland. Both of us felt, though, that our friendship had grown. While still in Switzerland, Erika heard that the Gestapo back home was searching for her. She decided to stay and pioneer in Switzerland. A few months later, the Society asked her to go to Spain. She pioneered in Madrid, then Bilbao, and later San Sebastián, where clergy-fomented persecution landed her and her pioneer partner in prison. In 1935 they were ordered to leave Spain. Erika came to the Netherlands, and that same year we were married.

Clouds of War on the Horizon

After our wedding, we pioneered in Heemstede, and later we moved to the city of Rotterdam. There our son, Wolfgang, was born in 1937. A year later we moved to the city of Groningen, in the north of the Netherlands, where we shared a home with German pioneers Ferdinand and Helga Holtorf and their daughter. In July 1938 the Society told us that the Dutch government had issued a warning that Witnesses who were German nationals were no longer allowed to preach. About that same time, I was appointed zone servant (circuit overseer), and our family moved to the *Lichtdrager* (Lightbearer), the Society's boat that served as home base for pioneers preaching in the northern part of the Netherlands. Most of the time, I was away from my family, cycling from one congregation to the next to encourage the brothers to keep on preaching. And the brothers did just that. Some even increased their activities. Wim Kettelarij was a good example.

When I met Wim, he was a young man who recognized the truth but was very busy as a farmhand. "If you want to have time to serve



Jehovah," I advised him, "you should find another job." He did. Later, when we met again, I encouraged him to pioneer. "But I have to work to eat," he replied. "You will eat," I assured him. "Jehovah will care for you." Wim began pioneering. Later, even during World War II, he served as a traveling overseer. Today, in his 80's, Wim is still a zealous Witness. Jehovah did indeed look after him.

Under Ban and Wanted

In May 1940, about a year after our second child, Reina, was born, the Dutch army surrendered and the Nazis occupied the Netherlands. In July the Gestapo took possession of the Society's office and printery. The following year, there was a wave of arrests of Witnesses, and I was caught. Being a Witness and a German of draft age, it was not hard to imagine what the Gestapo would do with me. I tried to resign myself to the idea that I would never see my family again.

Then in May 1941, the Gestapo let me out of prison and ordered me to go and report for military service. I could not believe it. That same day I dropped out of sight, and that same month I was back in the circuit work. The Gestapo put me on its most-wanted list.

Left to right: My grandson Jonathan and his wife, Mirjam; Erika, me, my son Wolfgang and his wife, Julia

How My Family Coped

My wife and children had moved to the village of Vorden in the eastern part of the country. To minimize the risks for them, however, I had to limit my visits home drastically. (Matthew 10:16) For security's sake, the brothers did not use my real name, only my pseudonym *Duitse Jan* (German John). Even my four-year-old son, Wolfgang, was not allowed to speak about "Dad" but only about "*Ome Jan*" (Uncle John). For him, this was very difficult emotionally.

While I was on the run, Erika cared for the children and kept on preaching. When Reina was two years old, Erika put her on the bicycle's luggage rack and took her along preaching in the rurals. Though food became hard to find, Erika never experienced a severe lack of food for the family. (Matthew 6:33) A Catholic



farmer, for whom I once had repaired a sewing machine, gave her potatoes. He also passed on messages from me to Erika. Once, she paid one gulden for an item in a drugstore. The owner, knowing that she was living in hiding and unable to obtain food ration cards, gave her the item and also two guildens. Such expressions of sympathy helped her to survive. —Hebrews 13:5.

A brother in prison with my father drew this picture of him in 1941



Working Side by Side With Courageous Brothers

Meanwhile, I continued to visit the congregations—although I contacted only the congregations' responsible brothers. Because the Gestapo was at my heels, I could never stay in one place for more than a few hours. Most of the brothers and sisters were not allowed to meet me. They were acquainted only with those Witnesses who belonged to their small Bible-study group. As a result, two fleshly sisters living in different parts of the same city found out only after World War II that both of them had become Witnesses during the war.

Finding hiding places for the Society's literature was another of my tasks. We also hid paper, stencil machines, and typewriters for making copies of *The Watchtower*, in case they would be needed. At times, we had to move the

books printed by the Society from one hiding place to another. I remember once transporting 30 cartons full of literature while trying not to be conspicuous—an unnerving job!

In addition, we organized the transportation of food from farms in eastern Netherlands to the cities in the west, even though this was forbidden. We would load food on a horse-drawn wagon and head west. When we reached a river, we could use none of the bridges because they were guarded by soldiers. Instead, we unloaded the cargo into small boats, shuttled the food across the river, and then reloaded the cargo onto another wagon. When we reached the city that was our destination, we waited till darkness fell, pulled socks over the horse's hooves, and quietly went to the congregation's secret food depot. From there, the food was distributed to needy brothers.

If the German army were to discover such a food depot, it could cost someone his life. Nonetheless, several brothers volunteered to help out. The Bloemink family in the town of Amersfoort, for instance, let their living room be used as a warehouse for food, although their house was only a stone's throw from a German army garrison! Courageous Witnesses such as these risked their lives in behalf of their brothers.

Jehovah helped my wife and me to remain faithful throughout the years of the ban. In May 1945 the German army was defeated, and my life on the run finally came to an end. The Society asked me to continue serving as a traveling overseer until other brothers became available. In 1947, Bertus van der Bijl took over my work.* By that time, our third child was born, and we settled in the eastern part of the country.

Sadness and Joy

Following the war, I learned that about a year after I left home for the Netherlands, Fa-

* See *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1998, for Brother Van der Bijl's life story, "There Is Nothing Better Than the Truth."

ther was imprisoned. He was released twice because of poor health, but each time he was imprisoned again. In February of 1938, he was sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp and then to Dachau. There, on May 14, 1942, my father passed away. He remained firm and loyal to the end.

Mother was also sent to the Dachau camp. She remained there until she was freed in 1945. Since the firm example of both of my parents contributed much to the spiritual blessings I have enjoyed, it was a privilege to have Mother come to live with us in 1954. My sister Margaretha—who had been pioneering in Communist East Germany since 1945—came along. Though mother was ill and spoke no Dutch, she continued to share in the field service until she faithfully ended her earthly course in October 1957.

The 1955 convention in Nuremberg, Germany, proved to be special. After we arrived there, brothers from Dresden told Erika that her mother was at the convention as well. Since Dresden was then under East German rule, Erika had not seen her mother for 21 years. A meeting was arranged, and mother and daughter embraced. What a joyful reunion that was!

In time, our family grew to eight children. Tragically, we lost one of our sons in a car accident. However, seeing all our remaining children serve Jehovah is a source of deep joy. We are happy that our son Wolfgang and his wife are in the circuit work and that their son also serves as a circuit overseer.

I am grateful to have witnessed the progress of Jehovah's work in the Netherlands. When I began pioneering here in 1933, there were about one hundred Witnesses. Today, there are more than 30,000. Although our physical strength is now waning, Erika and I are still determined to live by the words of that song of days gone by: "O for a faith that will not shrink."



RICHES OF GENEROSITY BRING JOY

AS A loving Christian overseer, the apostle Paul had the very best interests of his fellow believers at heart. (2 Corinthians 11:28) Hence, when in the mid-50's of the first century of our Common Era he organized a monetary collection for needy Christians in Judea, he used the opportunity to teach a valuable lesson about generosity. Paul stressed that cheerful giving is highly esteemed by Jehovah: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."—2 Corinthians 9:7.

In Deep Poverty, yet Liberal

Most first-century Christians were not socially prominent. Paul noted that among them were "not many powerful." They were "the weak things of the world," "the ignoble things of the world." (1 Corinthians 1:26-28) For example, the Christians living in Macedonia were in "deep poverty" and "under affliction." Still, those humble Macedonian believers begged for the privilege of contributing financially to "the ministry destined for the holy ones"; and what they gave, Paul testified, was "beyond their actual ability"!—2 Corinthians 8:1-4.

Still, such generous giving was not judged by the amount given. Rather, motivation, willingness to share, and heart disposition were important. Paul indicated to the Corinthian Christians that both mind and heart are involved in making contributions. He said: "I know your readiness of mind of which I am boasting to the Macedonians about you, . . . and your

zeal has stirred up the majority of them." They were 'resolved in their heart' to give generously.—2 Corinthians 9:2, 7.

'Their Spirit Incited Them'

The apostle Paul may have had in mind an earlier example of generous giving, one that took place in the wilderness more than 15 centuries before his time. The 12 tribes of Israel had been freed from slavery in Egypt. They were now at the foot of Mount Sinai, and Jehovah commanded them to build a tabernacle for worship and equip it with implements of worship. This would take many resources, and the nation was invited to contribute.

How did those Israelites respond? "They came, everyone whose heart impelled him, and they brought, everyone whose spirit incited him, Jehovah's contribution for the work of the tent of meeting." (Exodus 35:21) Did the nation make a generous offering? Very much so! The following report was given to Moses: "The people are bringing much more than what the service needs for the work that Jehovah has commanded to be done."—Exodus 36:5.

What was the financial condition of the Israelites back then? Not long before, they had been miserable slaves, 'oppressed in burden-bearing,' leading a 'bitter life,' a life of "affliction." (Exodus 1:11, 14; 3:7; 5:10-18) It is unlikely, then, that they were materially prosperous. True, the Israelites left the land of their slavery with flocks and herds. (Exodus 12:32) But those may not have amounted to much, since soon after leaving Egypt, they complained that they had neither meat nor bread to eat.—Exodus 16:3.

Where, then, did the Israelites get the valu-



ables that they contributed to the building of the tabernacle? From their former masters, the Egyptians. The Bible says: "The sons of Israel . . . went asking from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold and mantles. . . . [The Egyptians] granted them what was asked." These generous acts on the part of the Egyptians were a blessing from Jehovah, not from Pharaoh. The divine record says: "Jehovah gave the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, so that these granted them what was asked."—Exodus 12:35, 36.

Imagine, then, how the Israelites felt. Generations had suffered through bitter slavery and deprivation. Now they were free and had rich material possessions. How would they feel about parting with some of those possessions? They might have felt that they had earned them and had a right to keep them. However, when called upon to contribute financially to support pure worship, they did so—and not reluctantly or stingily! They did not forget that Jehovah had made it possible for them to have those material things. Thus, they gave abundantly of their silver and gold and livestock. They were "willing-hearted." Their 'hearts impelled them.' 'Their spirit incited them.' It truly was "a voluntary offering to Jehovah."—Exodus 25:1-9; 35:4-9, 20-29; 36:3-7.

A Readiness to Give

The size of a contribution does not necessarily give a true picture of the giver's generosity. Once Jesus Christ watched as people deposited money in the temple's treasury chests. Rich individuals dropped in many coins, but Jesus was impressed when he saw a needy widow drop in two small coins of very little value. He said: "This widow, although poor, dropped in more than they all did. . . . Out of her want [she] dropped in all the means of living she had."—Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44.

Paul's comments to the Corinthians were in harmony with this thought of Jesus. When it came to making contributions to help needy fellow believers, Paul observed: "If the readiness is there first, it is especially acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have." (2 Corinthians 8:12) Yes, contributions are not a matter for competition or comparison. A person gives according to his means, and Jehovah is pleased with a spirit of liberality.

Although no one can actually enrich Jehovah, who owns all things, contributing is a privilege that affords worshipers opportunity to display their love for him. (1 Chronicles 29:14-17) Contributions given, not for show or for other selfish motives, but with the proper

"USE IT WISELY!"

"I'm ten years old. I'm sending you this money so you can buy paper or anything else to make books."—*Cindy.*

"I love to send you this money to make more books for us. I saved this money from helping my daddy. So use it wisely!"—*Pam, age seven.*

"I was sad about the hurricane. I hope you are safe. This [\$2, U.S.] is all the money in my bank."—*Allison, age four.*

"My name is Rudy, and I'm 11 years old. My brother Ralph is six. And my sister Judith is two and a half. We have been saving from our allowance for three months to help our brothers in [a war-torn area]. We were able to save 20 dollars that we are sending now."

"I feel sorry for the brothers [hit by a hurricane]. I made 17 dollars working with my dad. I'm not sending this money for anything in particular, so I'll let you decide."—*Maclean, age eight.*



attitude and to advance true worship, bring joy and with it God's blessing. (Matthew 6:1-4) Jesus said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) We can enjoy a share in that happiness by giving of our strength in Jehovah's service and by setting aside something from our material belongings for the support of true worship and the aid of deserving ones.—1 Corinthians 16:1, 2.

Readiness to Give Today

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses are thrilled to observe the worldwide progress in the preaching of "this good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) During the last decade of the 20th century, more than 3,000,000 persons were baptized to symbolize their dedication to Jehovah God, and some 30,000 new congregations were formed. Yes, one third of the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses that exist today were formed during the last ten years! Most of this increase is the result of the hard work of sincere Christian men and women who give of their time and energy in order to visit their neighbors and tell them about Jehovah's purposes. Some of the increase is the result of the work of missionaries, who leave their homes and travel to distant lands to help there with the Kingdom-preaching work. The increase has resulted in the organizing of new circuits, which have necessitated the appointment of new circuit overseers. In addition, more Bibles have been needed for use in preaching and personal study. More printed literature has been needed. And in one country after another, branch buildings have had to be enlarged or replaced with larger premises. All these added needs have been supplied with the help of voluntary contributions from Jehovah's people.

A Need for Kingdom Halls

An outstanding need that has become evident with the increase in the number of Jehovah's Witnesses is that for Kingdom Halls. Surveys conducted early in the year 2000 revealed the need for more than 11,000 Kingdom

Halls in developing nations, where finances are limited. Consider Angola. Despite years of civil war, that country is experiencing an average annual increase of about 10 percent in the number of Kingdom publishers. However, the majority of the 675 congregations in this large African country meet in the open. There are only 22 Kingdom Halls in the country, and of these only 12 have some type of roof.

A similar situation exists in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Although there are almost 300 congregations in the capital city of Kinshasa, there are only ten Kingdom Halls. Nationwide, this country has an immediate need for more than 1,500 Kingdom Halls. Because of the rapid growth in Eastern European countries, Russia and Ukraine report a combined need for hundreds of Kingdom Halls. The explosive growth in Latin America is underscored in Brazil, where there are more than half a million Witnesses and a great need for more Kingdom Halls.

To meet the needs in such countries, Jehovah's Witnesses are implementing an accelerated program for constructing Kingdom Halls. The program is funded by the generous contributions of the worldwide brotherhood, so that even the poorest congregations will be able to have a suitable center of worship.

As in the time of ancient Israel, much can be accomplished because sincere Christians 'honor Jehovah with their valuable things.' (Proverbs 3:9, 10) The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses would like to take this opportunity to express deep gratitude to everyone whose heart has impelled him to share in this voluntary giving. And we can be confident that Jehovah's spirit will continue to stir the hearts of his people to support the needs of the ever-expanding Kingdom work.

As the worldwide expansion proceeds, may we continually look for opportunities to show our cheerfulness and willingness in giving of our strength, our time, and our resources. And may we experience the true joy that such a giving spirit brings.

Ways in Which Some Choose to Give CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLDWIDE WORK

Many set aside, or budget, an amount that they place in the contribution boxes labeled "Contributions for the Society's Worldwide Work—Matthew 24:14." Each month congregations forward these amounts either to the world headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, or to the local branch office.

Voluntary donations of money may also be sent directly to the Treasurer's Office, **Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201-2483**, or to the Society's office that serves your country. Jewelry or other valuables may be donated as well. A brief letter stating that such is an outright gift should accompany these contributions.

CONDITIONAL-DONATION ARRANGEMENT

Money may be given to the Watch Tower Society under a special arrangement in which, should the donor have a personal need, the donation may be returned to him. For more information, please contact the Treasurer's Office at the address noted above.

CHARITABLE PLANNING

In addition to outright gifts of money and conditional donations of money, there are other methods of giving to benefit Kingdom service worldwide. These include:

Insurance: The Watch Tower Society may be named as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or in a retirement/pension plan.

Bank Accounts: Bank accounts, certificates of deposit, or individual retirement accounts may be placed *in trust for* or made *payable on death* to the Watch Tower Society, in accord with local bank requirements.

Stocks and Bonds: Stocks and bonds may be donated to the Watch Tower Society as an outright gift.

Real Estate: Salable real estate may be donated to the Watch Tower Society either by making an outright gift or by reserving a life estate to the donor, who can continue to live therein during

his or her lifetime. One should contact the Society before deeding any real estate to the Society.

Wills and Trusts: Property or money may be bequeathed to the Watch Tower Society by means of a legally executed will, or the Society may be named as a beneficiary of a trust agreement. A trust benefiting a religious organization may provide certain tax advantages.

As the term "charitable planning" implies, these types of donations typically require some planning on the part of the donor. To assist individuals desiring to benefit the Society through some form of charitable planning, the Society has prepared a brochure in English and Spanish entitled *Charitable Planning to Benefit Kingdom Service Worldwide*. The brochure was written in response to the many inquiries the Society has received regarding gifts, wills, and trusts. It also contains additional useful information on estate, financial, and tax planning. And it is designed to help individuals in the United States who are planning to make a special gift to the Society now or to leave a bequest at death to select the most advantageous and efficient method in the light of their family and personal circumstances. This brochure may be obtained by requesting a copy directly from the Charitable Planning Office.

After reading the brochure and conferring with the Charitable Planning Office, many have been able to assist the Society and at the same time, maximize the tax benefits of doing so. The Charitable Planning Office should be informed of and receive a copy of any relevant document pertaining to any of these arrangements. If you are interested in any of these charitable planning arrangements, you should contact the Charitable Planning Office, either in writing or by telephone, at the address listed below or at the Society's office that serves your country.

CHARITABLE PLANNING OFFICE

Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of
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IS WORLD peace on the horizon? Many once thought so but are now skeptical. According to a report discussing challenges for our future, published in South Africa's *Daily Mail & Guardian*, "predictions of a new international order made only 10 years ago now seem hopelessly optimistic."

The authors reflect on the hopeful spirit that prevailed a mere decade ago. The Cold War had just ended, and superpower strife was no more. At what seemed to be the dawn of a new era, many expected that mankind would begin to make significant headway in tackling poverty, illness, and environmental issues. "Those forecasts now seem hopelessly utopian," the report says. "New conflicts have broken out in areas we were hardly aware of; world poverty continues to rise. There are two new nuclear powers. The UN's reputation has been deeply dented by its inadequate response to a string of humanitarian crises. The mood is shifting from utopia to dystopia."

Students of the Bible realize that man's efforts, no matter how noble, can never fully succeed. Why not? Because, as the Bible states, "the whole world is lying in the pow-

World Peace HOW?

er of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) While under Satan's control, the world cannot be brought to the Paradise condition for which God created it.

At the same time, there is basis for optimism. Jehovah God promises to bring about world peace, not by patching up this system of things, but by bringing about "a new earth" in which "righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13) Yes, by means of God's Kingdom, our globe will be transformed into a peaceful, happy home, where life and work will be a constant joy for all obedient mankind. Furthermore, God promises to "wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." These promises are not based on the shaky predictions of men. Rather, they are based on the infallible Word of the Creator, who cannot lie.—Revelation 21:4; Titus 1:2.