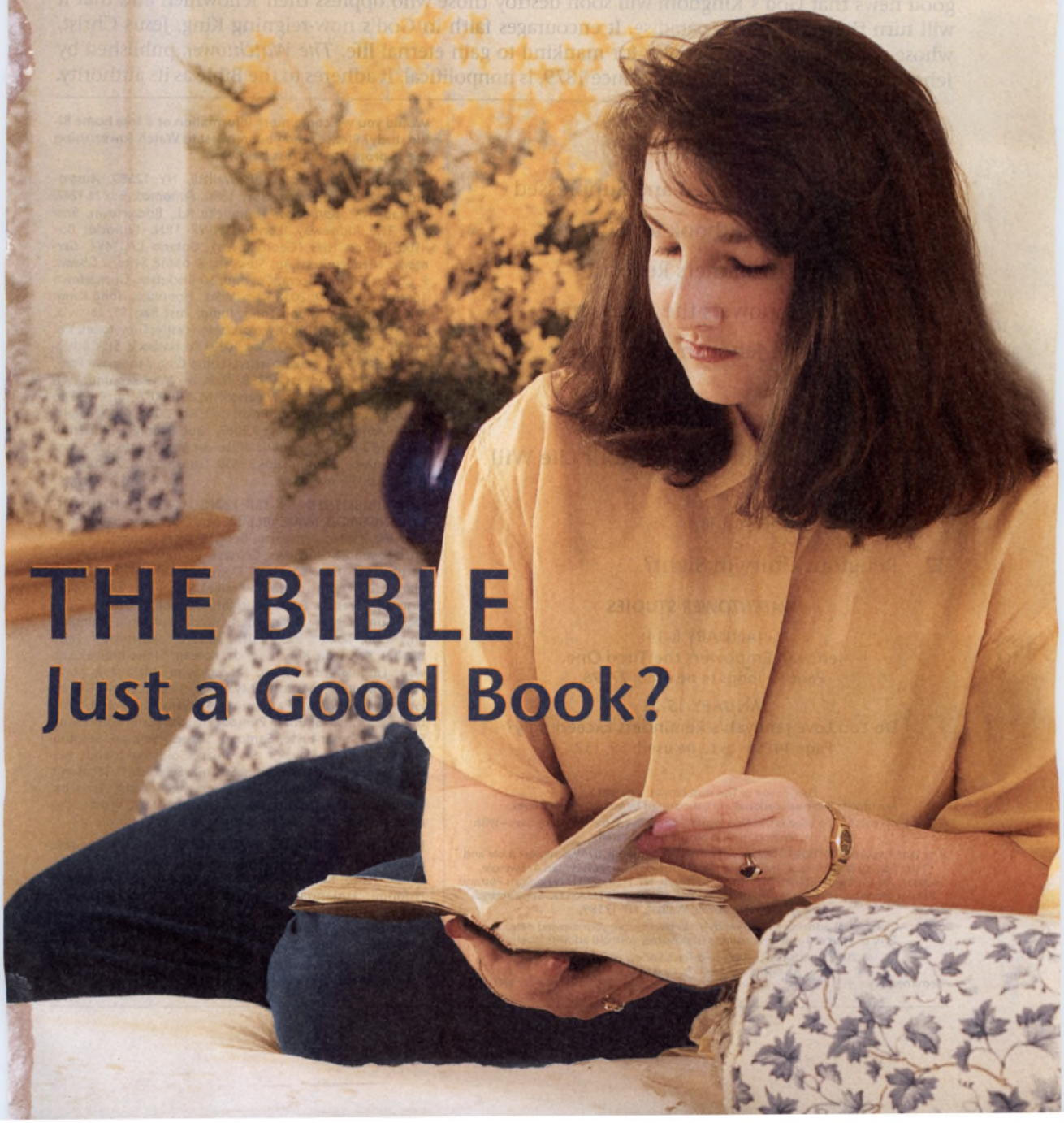
DECEMBER 1, 2000

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



THE BIBLE
Just a Good Book?

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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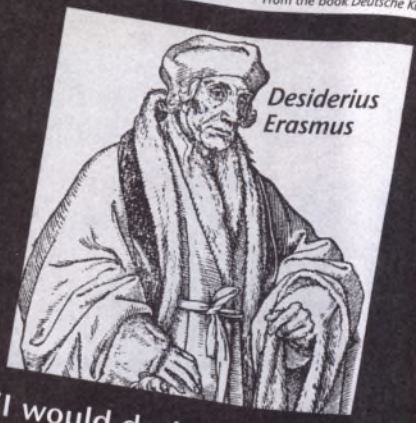


Desiderius Erasmus

"I would desire that the sacred books should be translated into all languages," wrote Desiderius Erasmus, acclaimed Dutch scholar of the 16th century.

THE BIBLE
Cherished and Suppressed

ERASMUS' fondest hope was that everyone could read and understand the Scriptures. The Bible's opponents, however, fiercely rejected such an idea. In fact, Europe at the time was an exceedingly dangerous place for anyone even remotely curious about the Bible's contents. In England a parliamentary statute was enacted, which ordered that "whoever read the Scriptures in English should forfeit land, chattels, goods, and life . . . and that, if they continued obstinate, or relapsed after being pardoned, they should first be hanged for treason against the king, and then burned for heresy against God."

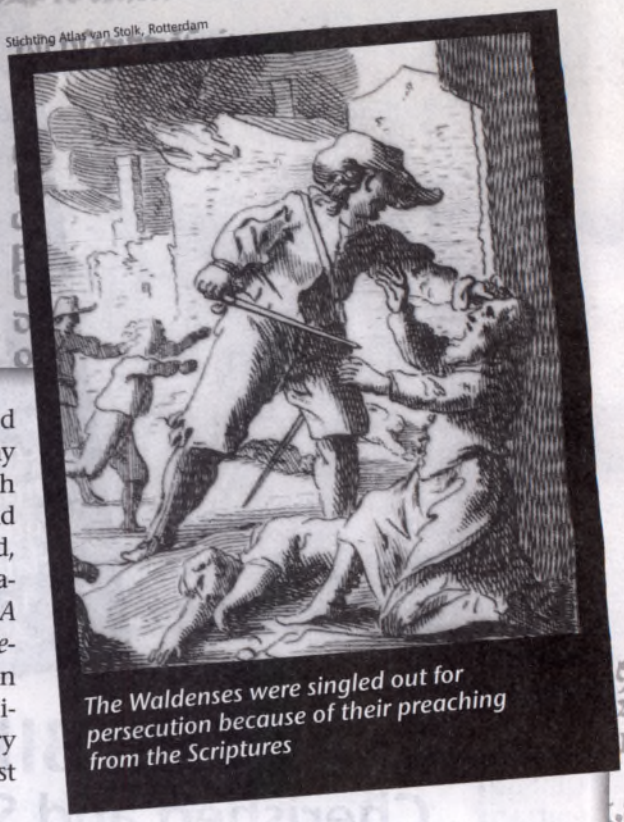
On the European mainland, the Catholic Inquisition ruthlessly hunted down "heretical" sects, such as the French Waldenses, and singled them out for persecution because of their habit of preaching "from the gospels and epistles and other sacred scriptures, . . . since preaching and exposition of holy scripture [was] completely forbidden to laymen." Countless men and women suffered excruciating torture and death because of their love for the Bible. They risked the severest penalties just to recite the Lord's Prayer or the Ten Commandments and to teach them to their children.

Such devotion to the Word of God continued to live in the hearts of many pilgrims who sailed to colonize North America. In early America, "reading and religion were inextricably intertwined, defining a culture based entirely on familiarity with the Bible," says the book *A History of Private Life—Passions of the Renaissance.* In fact, a sermon published in Boston in 1767 recommended: "Be diligent in reading holy scripture. Every morning and every evening you must read a chapter of your Bible."

According to the Barna Research Group in Ventura, California, more than 90 percent of Americans own an average of three Bibles. A recent study shows, though, that while the Bible is still highly regarded there, "spending time reading it, studying it and applying it . . . is a thing of the past." Most have only a passing acquaintance with its contents. One newspaper columnist observed: "The thought that [the Bible] still might have an urgent bearing on current problems and concerns seldom occurs."

The Tide of Secular Thinking

A popular belief is that we can make our way in life solely through reason and human cooperation. The Bible is treated as just one of many books about religious opinions and personal experiences, not as a book of facts and truth.



Stichting Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam

The Waldenses were singled out for persecution because of their preaching from the Scriptures

So how do most people deal with the increasingly complex and troubling issues in life? They operate in a spiritual vacuum, with no solid moral and religious guidelines and direction. They have become like ships without rudders, "tossed backward and forward and blown about by every breath of human teaching, . . . by the trickery and the craftiness of men."—Ephesians 4:14, *The Twentieth Century New Testament.*

We must ask, then, Is the Bible just another religious book? Or is it truly God's Word, containing practical and essential information? (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Is the Bible worthy of our consideration? The following article will address these questions.

THE BIBLE
A Textbook for Living

"THE word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) This description of what God's Word can accomplish surely stamps the Bible as more than just a good book.

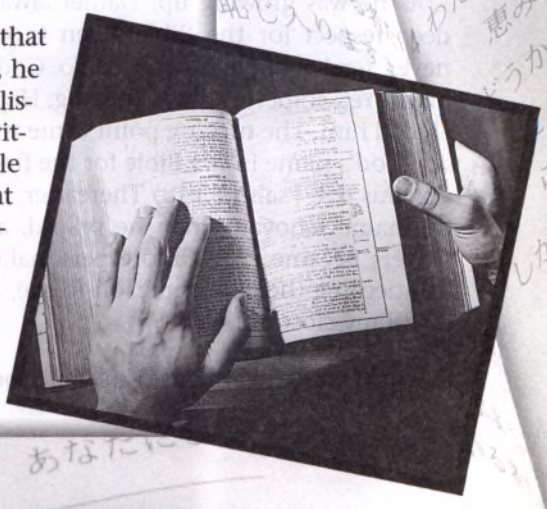
"Its message is as vital to our lives as our next breath," one religion writer put it succinctly. Then he added: "When you take the issue of our longing and need for healing today and read the Bible in that light, astonishing results follow." Like a lamp that burns brightly, the Bible sheds light on the many complex issues and problems of modern-day living.—Psalm 119:105.

Indeed, the wisdom expressed in the Bible has the power to mold our thinking, help us solve problems, improve the quality of our life, and equip us with the skills to cope with those situations that we cannot change. Most important, the Bible enables us to get to know and love God.

A Book That Gives Purpose

The Author of the Bible, Jehovah God, is 'familiar with all our ways.' He knows more about our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs than even we do. (Psalm 139:1-3) Thoughtfully, he sets clear limits for human behavior. (Micah 6:8) It makes sense to seek to understand those limits and directions and learn to live by them. Happy is the man whose "delight is in the law of Jehovah," says the psalmist. "Everything he does will succeed." (Psalm 1:1-3) Such a prospect surely merits our examination.

Maurice, a retired schoolteacher, always believed that the Bible had some historical and literary value. Yet, he was skeptical about its being divinely inspired. After listening to an explanation of why God gave his written Word to humans, Maurice examined various Bible prophecies. As a young man, he had studied ancient history, literature, science, and geography. He admits that he was too clever in his own eyes to see the numerous examples in support of the Bible's authenticity. "I was caught up in the blind race for



ease, wealth, and the pleasures of life. Unfortunately, I remained uninformed and ignorant to the beauty and veracity of the greatest book ever written."

Now in his 70's, Maurice, alluding to the account about Jesus' appearance to the apostle Thomas, says appreciatively: "My hand has been guided to the 'bleeding wound' which will forever banish from my mind all doubt that the Bible is anything but the truth." (John 20:24-29) As the apostle Paul rightly said, the Bible exposes the intentions of the heart, and it gives meaning to life. It is truly a textbook for living.

The Bible can strengthen your resolve to overcome harmful habits

Adding Stability to a Troubled Life

The Bible also gives counsel that helps people to rid themselves of bad habits. Daniel was able to overcome the unclean habit of smoking, as well as to stop wild partying and alcohol abuse. (Romans 13:13; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 5:19-21) Realistically, to root out such habits and to put on "the new personality" takes concerted effort. (Ephesians 4:22-24) "It was a challenge," says Daniel, "because we are so imperfect." Nevertheless, he succeeded. Now Daniel reads God's Word every day, and it keeps him close to Jehovah.

As he was growing up, Daniel always had deep respect for the Bible—even though he never read it—and he prayed to God every night. Yet, something was missing. Happiness eluded him. The turning point came when he saw God's name in the Bible for the first time. (Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18) Thereafter, he used the name Jehovah when he prayed, and his prayers became much more personal. "Jehovah became the closest person to me, and he is still my closest friend."

Prior to learning about the Bible, Daniel's view of the future was bleak. "It does not take much intelligence to see what is happening in the world," he says. "I was scared, and I tried to keep busy to block it out of my mind." Then he learned that God will establish justice for all on a cleansed earth, where obedient humans can enjoy eternal peace and happiness. (Psalm 37:10, 11; Daniel 2:44; Revelation 21:3, 4) Now Daniel has a sure hope. This stabilizing influence of the Bible enables him to maintain a positive outlook on life.

Help in Overcoming Emotional Problems

George was seven when his mother died. He dreaded going to sleep at night, not knowing if he would wake up the next day. Then he read what Jesus said about death and the resurrection: "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Jesus'] voice and come out." He was also touched by Jesus' words: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life." (John 5:28, 29; 11:25) Such thoughts sounded reasonable, logical, and comforting. "This truth," says George, "not only appeals to the mind but also touches the heart."

Daniel, mentioned earlier, also had fears. His mother could not raise him on her own, so he was sent to live in many foster homes. He always felt like an outsider and longed for the security of belonging to a loving family. Eventually, he found what he was looking for through his study of the Bible. Daniel came into association with the Christian congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses and became part

of a spiritual family, where he experienced the feeling of acceptance and of being loved by others. Indeed, the Bible is beneficial in a practical and an emotionally satisfying way.

Remember, Jehovah sees what is in our heart and knows what we are looking for. God is "making an estimate of hearts," and he gives "to each one according to his ways."—Proverbs 21:2; Jeremiah 17:10.

Practical Counsel on Family Life

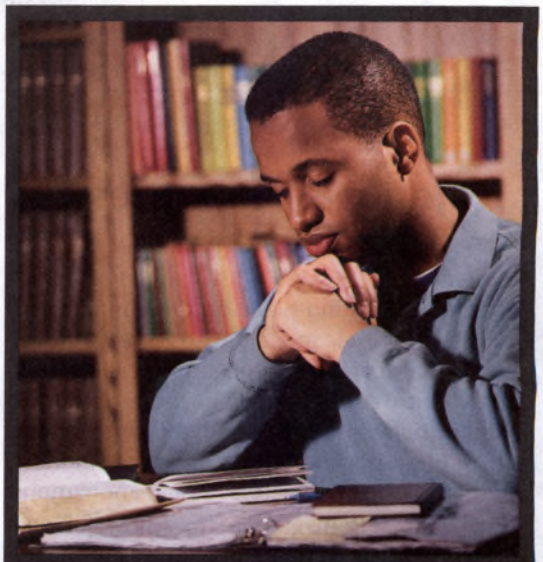
The Bible gives practical counsel when it comes to matters of human relations. George says: "Personality conflicts or misunderstandings are among the most stressful situations in life." How does he deal with them? "If I feel that somebody has something against me, I apply the straightforward counsel from Matthew 5:23, 24: 'Make your peace with your brother.' The simple fact that I can talk about the conflict produces results. I can feel the peace of God that the Bible speaks of. It works. It is so practical."—Philippians 4:6, 7.

When husband and wife disagree, both need to "be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath." (James 1:19) Such advice improves communication. George adds: "When I apply the counsel to love and treat my wife as I do myself, I see immediate results. It is easier for her to respect me." (Ephesians 5:28-33) Yes, the Bible teaches us how to acknowledge and deal with our own imperfections and how to have success in coping with those of others.

Counsel That Endures

Wise King Solomon said: "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) How uncomplicated, yet profound, those words are!

The Bible is a force for good. It enables lovers of God to bring their life in harmony with his will and to find happiness in "walking in the law of Jehovah." (Psalm 119:1) No matter what our circumstances, the Bible contains the direction and counsel that we need. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Read it daily, meditate on what you read, and apply it. It will keep your mind clear and focused on things that are pure and wholesome. (Philippians 4:8, 9) You will learn not only how to live and enjoy life but also how to love the Creator of life.



The Bible teaches you how to draw close to God

By following such a course, the Bible will become for you—as it has for millions of others—more than just a good book. It will truly prove to be a textbook for living!

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Christmas Customs —Are They Christian?

Why Do You Serve God?

Stand Complete With Firm Conviction

Jehovah Provides His People a Resting-Place

A SHADED resting-place on a mountain path is a most welcome sight to a weary traveler. In Nepal, such resting-places are called *chautara*. A typical *chautara* may be located next to a luxuriant banyan tree, a shady place to sit and rest. Setting up a *chautara* is an act of kindness, and most of the benefactors remain anonymous.

Experiences from Nepal show how Jehovah God has become a Source of joy and spiritual refreshment to many weary "travelers" in this system of things.—Psalm 23:2.

• Lil Kumari lives in the beautiful city of Pokhara, with a magnificent view of the snow-capped Himalaya Mountains. But worried about family finances, Lil Kumari felt that there was little to look forward to. When one of Jehovah's Witnesses visited her, she was moved by the Bible's bright hope and immediately requested a home Bible study.

Although Lil Kumari enjoyed the study, it was not easy to continue because of strong family opposition. But she did not give up. She attended Christian meetings regularly and applied what she was learning, especially on the matter of wifely subjection. As a result, her husband and her mother came to realize that Lil Kumari's Bible study was benefiting the entire family.

Her husband and a number of relatives are now studying God's Word. At a recent assembly held in Pokhara, Lil Kumari enjoyed the program along with 15 of her relatives. She says: "My home has become a restful place because our family is now united in true worship, and I have found true peace of mind."

• Although caste discrimination is illegal in Nepal, it still wields a powerful influence on the people's way of life. Thus, many are interested in what the Bible has to say about equality and impartiality. Learning that "God is not partial" greatly changed the life of Surya Maya and her family.—Acts 10:34.

Surya Maya was distressed by the injustice of caste discrimination and the burden of deep-rooted traditions and customs. Being a devout woman, for years Surya Maya asked her idol gods for help. But her prayers went unanswered. One day when she was crying out for help, her six-year-old granddaughter Babita approached her and asked: "Why are you crying for help before idols that can't do anything?"

It turned out that Babita's mother was studying the Bible with one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Babita enthusiastically invited her grandmother to a Christian meeting. When Surya Maya attended, she was surprised to see people of various castes enjoying one another's company without any prejudice. Immediately she requested a home Bible study. Although this resulted in her being ostracized by her neighbors, she was not disheartened; neither did her limited ability to read and write prevent her from making spiritual progress.

Eight years have passed, and six members of her family, including her husband and three children, have become Jehovah's Witnesses. Surya Maya is now a full-time minister, a regular pioneer, joyfully helping others to unload their heavy burdens at the real resting-place that only Jehovah can provide.

JEHOVAH EMPOWERS THE TIRED ONE

"[Jehovah] is giving to the tired one power; and to the one without dynamic energy he makes full might abound."—ISAIAH 40:29.

JEHOVAH is limitless in power. And what dynamic energy resides in the things he created! The tiny atom—the very building block of all things—is so small that a single drop of water contains one hundred billion billion atoms.* All life on our globe depends on the energy generated by atomic reactions on the sun. But how much solar energy is needed to sustain earthly life? The earth receives only a minuscule fraction of all the energy that is produced by the sun. Nevertheless, the very tiny fraction of the sun's energy that falls on the earth is immeasurably greater than the total energy used in the world's industries.

[2] Whether we think about the atom or turn our attention to the vast universe, we are impressed by Jehovah's awesome power. No wonder he could say: "Raise your eyes high up and see. Who has created these things? It is the One who is bringing forth the army of them even

* This number, by the U.S. system of numeration, is the figure 1 followed by 20 zeros.

1. Illustrate the power that resides in things God has created.

2. In essence, what does Isaiah 40:26 say about Jehovah's power?

by number, all of whom he calls even by name. Due to the abundance of dynamic energy, he also being vigorous in power, not one of them is missing"! (Isaiah 40:26) Yes, Jehovah is "vigorous in power," and he is the Source of the "dynamic energy" used to bring the entire universe into existence.

More Than Normal Power Needed

[3] While God has no limit in power, humans do tire out. Everywhere we go, we see tired people. They wake up tired, go to work or school tired, come home tired, and go to bed not merely tired but exhausted. Some wish that they could go somewhere and get a little badly needed rest. As Jehovah's servants, we also get tired, for our life of godly devotion calls for vigorous exertion. (Mark 6:30, 31; Luke 13:24; 1 Timothy 4:8) And there are many other factors that drain us of strength.

[4] Even though we are Christians, we are not immune to the problems experienced by people in general. (Job 14:1) Illness, financial reverses, or other difficulties common to life may cause discouragement, with its weakening effect. Added to these challenges are the trials peculiar to those persecuted for righteousness' sake. (2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:14) Because of daily pressures from the world and opposition to our Kingdom-preaching work, some of us may be so fatigued that we feel like slowing down in Jehovah's service. Furthermore, in an effort to break our integrity to God, Satan the Devil is using every means at his disposal. How, then, can we get the spiritual strength needed to keep from tiring out and quitting?

[5] For spiritual strength, we must rely on Jehovah, the all-powerful Creator. The apostle Paul pointed out that the Christian ministry would require more than the normal power of imperfect humans. He wrote: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the power beyond what is normal may be God's and not that out of ourselves." (2 Corinthians 4:7) Anointed Christians are carrying out "the ministry of the reconciliation" with the support of their companions who have the earthly hope. (2 Corinthians 5: 18; John 10:16; Revelation 7:9) Since we imperfect humans are doing God's work in the face of persecution, we cannot do it merely in our own strength. Jehovah helps us by means of his holy spirit, and thus our weakness magnifies his power. And how we are comforted by the assurance that "Jehovah will be supporting the righteous ones"!—Psalm 37:17.

'Jehovah Is Our Vital Energy'

[6] Our heavenly Father is "vigorous in power" and can easily invigorate us. In fact, we are told: "[Jehovah] is giving to the tired one power; and to the one without dynamic energy he makes full might abound. Boys will both tire out and grow weary, and young men themselves will without fail stumble, but those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not tire out." (Isaiah 40:29-31) Because of increasing pressures, we may sometimes feel like an exhausted runner whose legs seem unable to carry him any farther. But the finish line in the race for life is just ahead, and we must not give up. (2 Chronicles 29:11) Our Adversary, the Devil, is roving about "like a roaring lion," and he wants to stop us. (1 Peter 5:8) Let us remember that 'Jehovah is our strength and our shield,' and he has made abundant provisions 'to give the tired one power.'—Psalm 28:7.

[7] Jehovah gave David the strength needed to

3, 4. (a) What are some factors that may tire us out? (b) What question requires consideration?

5. Why is more than human strength needed to carry out the Christian ministry?

6. How do the Scriptures assure us that Jehovah is our Source of strength?

7, 8. What proof is there that Jehovah strengthened David, Habakkuk, and Paul?

carry on in the face of great obstacles. With full faith and confidence, David therefore wrote: "By God we shall gain vital energy, and he himself will tread down our adversaries." (Psalm 60:12) Jehovah also energized Habakkuk so that he might complete his assignment as prophet. Says Habakkuk 3:19: "Jehovah the Sovereign Lord is my vital energy; and he will make my feet like those of the hinds, and upon my high places he will cause me to tread." Also noteworthy is the example of Paul, who wrote: "For all things I have the strength by virtue of [God] who imparts power to me."—Philippians 4:13.

8 Like David, Habakkuk, and Paul, we should exercise faith in God's ability to strengthen us and in his power to save us. Aware that the Sovereign Lord Jehovah is our Source of "vital energy," let us now consider some ways to draw spiritual strength from provisions that God makes in abundance.

Spiritual Provisions to Invigorate Us

9 Diligent study of the Scriptures with the help of Christian publications can invigorate and sustain us. The psalmist sang: "Happy is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night. And he will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed." (Psalm 1:1-3) Just as we must eat to maintain physical strength, we need to take in spiritual food provided by God through his Word and Christian publications to maintain our spiritual strength. Therefore, meaningful study and meditation are essential.

9. What role do Christian publications play in nourishing us?

10 It is rewarding indeed to meditate on "the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10) But when can we find time for meditation? Abraham's son Isaac "was out walking in order to meditate in the field at about the falling of evening." (Genesis 24:63-67) The psalmist David 'meditated on God during the night watches.' (Psalm 63:6) We may study God's Word and meditate on it in the morning, in the evening, at night—indeed, at any time. Such study and meditation lead to another of Jehovah's spiritually strengthening provisions —prayer.

11 Regular prayer to God helps to invigorate us. May we therefore "persevere in prayer." (Romans 12:12) At times, we need to make a specific request for the wisdom and strength needed to cope with a trial. (James 1:5-8) Let us also thank and praise God when we observe the outworking of his purposes or see that he has strengthened us to carry on in his service. (Philippians 4:6, 7) If we remain close to Jehovah in prayer, he will never abandon us. "Look!" sang David, "God is my helper."—Psalm 54:4.

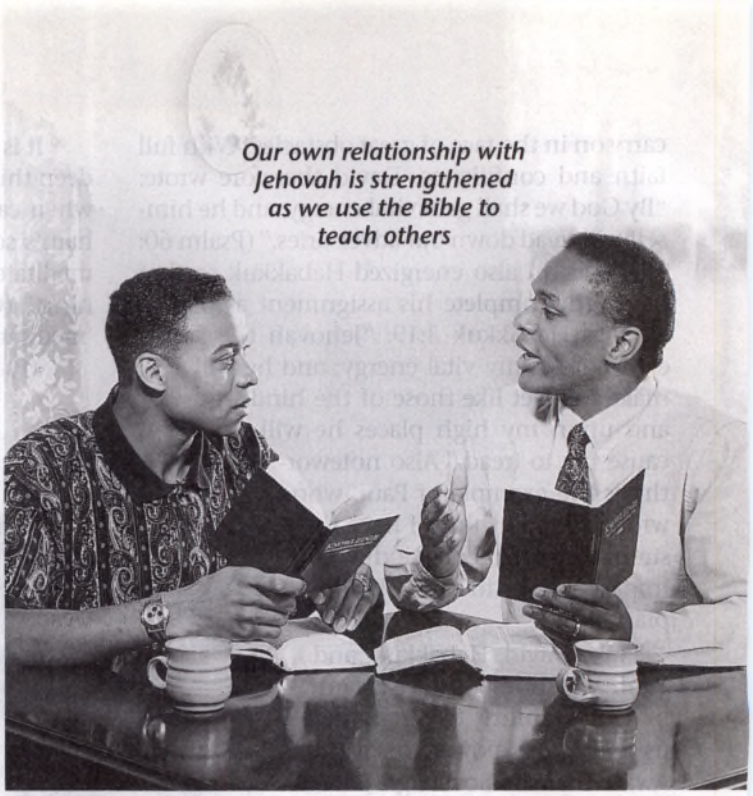
12 Our heavenly Father invigorates us and strengthens us by means of his holy spirit, or active force. Paul wrote: "I bend my knees to the Father . . . to the end that he may grant you according to the riches of his glory to be made mighty in the man you are inside with power through his spirit." (Ephesians 3:14-16) We should pray for holy spirit, confident that Jehovah will bless us with it. Jesus reasoned: If a child asks for a fish, will a loving father give him a serpent? Of course not. Hence, he concluded: "If you, although being [sinful

10. When might we find time for study and meditation?

11. Why should we attach great importance to regular prayer?

12. Why should we ask God for his holy spirit?

and thus more or less] wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!" (Luke 11:11-13) Let us pray with such confidence and always remember that faithful servants of God can be "made mighty" with power through his spirit.



Our own relationship with Jehovah is strengthened as we use the Bible to teach others

The Congregation a Strengthening Aid

13 Jehovah invigorates us through the meetings of the Christian congregation. Jesus said: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst." (Matthew 18:20) When Jesus made that promise, he was discussing matters that needed the attention of those taking the lead in the congregation. (Matthew 18:15-19) However, his words apply in principle to all of our meetings, assemblies, and conventions, which are opened and closed with prayer in his name. (John 14:14) So it is a privilege to attend such Christian gatherings, whether few are on hand or thousands are present. Let us therefore display gratitude for these occasions designed to strengthen us spiritually and incite us to love and fine works.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

14 Christian elders provide spiritual help and encouragement. (1 Peter 5:2, 3) Paul helped and encouraged the congregations he served, as traveling overseers do today. In fact, he yearned to be with fellow believers so that there might be an upbuilding interchange of encouragement. (Acts 14:19-22; Romans 1:11, 12) May we always show appreciation for our local elders and other Christian overseers, who play a large part in strengthening us spiritually.

13. How should we view Christian meetings?
14. What benefit do we derive from the efforts of Christian elders?

15 Fellow believers who make up our congregation can be "a strengthening aid." (Colossians 4:10, 11) As 'true companions' they can help us in times of distress. (Proverbs 17:17) For instance, when 220 servants of God were released from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp under Nazi guard in 1945, they faced a 120-mile trek. They traveled in a group, and the stronger ones pulled the weakest along in a few small carts. The result? In a death march that claimed the lives of more than 10,000 concentration camp inmates, not one of Jehovah's Witnesses died. Such accounts appearing in Watch Tower publications, including the *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* and *Jehovah's Witnesses —Proclaimers of God's Kingdom,* prove that God empowers his people, so that they do not give up.—Galatians 6:9.*

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

15. How do fellow believers in our congregation prove to be "a strengthening aid"?

Strengthened by Our Field Ministry

[16] Regular participation in the Kingdom-preaching work strengthens us spiritually. Such activity helps us to focus on God's Kingdom and to keep eternity and its blessed prospects in view. (Jude 20, 21) The Scriptural promises that we talk about in our ministry give us hope and can make us as resolute as the prophet Micah, who said: "We . . . shall walk in the name of Jehovah our God to time indefinite, even forever."—Micah 4:5.

[17] Our own relationship with Jehovah is strengthened as we make greater use of the Scriptures in teaching others. For example, when conducting home Bible studies with the help of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life,* it is wise to read and discuss a number of the cited scriptures. This helps the student and strengthens our own spiritual comprehension. If a student has trouble understanding a Biblical concept or an illustration, more than one session of study can be used to cover a single chapter in the *Knowledge* book. How glad we are to prepare well and make an extra effort to help others draw close to God!

[18] Each year, the *Knowledge* book is being used effectively to help thousands to become Jehovah's dedicated servants, and this includes many who have no Bible background. For instance, when he was a child, a Hindu man in Sri Lanka overheard a Witness talk about Paradise. Some years later he approached her, and soon her husband started a Bible study with him. In fact, the young man came for a study daily, and the *Knowledge* book was completed in a relatively short time. He began to attend all the meetings, cut ties with his former religion, and became a Kingdom publisher. When he was baptized, he was already conducting a home Bible study with a personal acquaintance.

16. How does regular participation in the ministry strengthen us spiritually?
17. What suggestions are offered regarding home Bible studies?
18. Illustrate how the *Knowledge* book is being used effectively.

How Would You Answer?

- Why do Jehovah's people need more than normal power?
- What Scriptural proof is there that God empowers his servants?
- What are some spiritual provisions that Jehovah has made to strengthen us?
- How can we show that we look to God for strength?

[19] Seeking first the Kingdom brings us strengthening joy. (Matthew 6:33) Though we experience various trials, we continue happily and zealously proclaiming the good news. (Titus 2:14) Many of us are meeting the requirements for full-time pioneer service, and some are serving where the need for evangelizers is greater. Whether we joyfully promote Kingdom interests in these or other ways, we are confident that Jehovah will not forget our work and the love we show for his name.—Hebrews 6: 10-12.

Carry On in Jehovah's Strength

[20] By all means, let us demonstrate that we hope in Jehovah and look to him for strength. We can do so by fully availing ourselves of the spiritual provisions he makes through the 'faithful slave.' (Matthew 24:45) Private and congregational study of God's Word with the aid of Christian publications, heartfelt prayer, spiritual assistance of the elders, fine examples of faithful fellow believers, and regular participation in the ministry are among the provisions that strengthen our relationship with Jehovah and empower us to carry on in his sacred service.

19. As we seek first the Kingdom, of what can we be sure?
20. How can we demonstrate that we look to Jehovah for strength?

[21] Despite our human frailty, Jehovah will strengthen us to do his will if we rely on him for aid. Aware of the need for such help, the apostle Peter wrote: "If anyone ministers, let him minister as dependent on the strength that God supplies." (1 Peter 4:11) And Paul showed his reliance upon God-given strength when he said: "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in cases of need, in persecutions and difficulties, for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am powerful." (2 Corinthians 12:10) May we display the same conviction and bring glory to the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, who empowers the tired one.—Isaiah 12:2.

21. How did the apostles Peter and Paul express the need for God-given strength?

DO YOU LOVE JEHOVAH'S REMINDERS EXCEEDINGLY?

"My soul has kept your reminders, and I love them exceedingly."—PSALM 119:167.

JEHOVAH wants his people to be happy. To enjoy true happiness, of course, we must walk in God's law and observe his orders. To that end, he gives us reminders. These are repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures, especially in Psalm 119, possibly composed by Judah's young Prince Hezekiah. This beautiful song begins with the words: "Happy are the ones faultless in their way, the ones walking in the law of Jehovah. Happy are those observing his reminders; with all the heart they keep searching for him."—Psalm 119: 1, 2.

[2] We 'walk in the law of Jehovah' by taking in accurate knowledge of his Word and by applying it in life. Since we are imperfect, however, we need reminders. The Hebrew word rendered "reminders" indicates that God calls his law, orders, regulations, commandments, and statutes back to our minds. (Matthew 10:18-20) We will remain happy only if we continue to observe such reminders, for they help us to avoid spiritual pitfalls that result in calamity and sorrow.

1. Where do we especially find repeated references to Jehovah's reminders?
2. How are God's reminders related to happiness?

Cleave to Jehovah's Reminders

[3] God's reminders were dear to the psalmist who sang: "I hurried up, and I did not delay to keep your commandments. The very ropes of the wicked ones surrounded me. Your law I did not forget." (Psalm 119: 60, 61) Jehovah's reminders help us to endure persecution because we are confident that our heavenly Father can cut the ropes of restraint that enemies tie about us. In due time, he frees

3. On the basis of Psalm 119:60, 61, what confidence do we have?

us from such obstacles so that we can carry out the Kingdom-preaching work.—Mark 13:10.

4 At times, we are corrected by Jehovah's reminders. May we always appreciate such correction, even as the psalmist did. He prayerfully said to God: "Your reminders are what I am fond of . . . I have loved your reminders." (Psalm 119:24, 119) We have more of God's reminders than the psalmist had. The hundreds of quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures that appear in the Greek Scriptures remind us not only of Jehovah's instructions to his people under the Law but also of his purposes concerning the Christian congregation. When God sees fit to remind us of things having to do with his laws, we are grateful for such direction. And by 'cleaving to Jehovah's reminders,' we avoid sinful enticements that displease our Creator and rob us of happiness.—Psalm 119:31.

5 How much should we love Jehovah's reminders? "My soul has kept your reminders, and I love them *exceedingly,*" sang the psalmist. (Psalm 119:167) We will come to love Jehovah's reminders exceedingly if we view and accept them as the admonition of a Father who really cares about us. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) We need his reminders, and our love for them will grow as we see how they benefit us.

Why We Need God's Reminders

6 One reason why we need Jehovah's reminders is that we are forgetful. Says *The World Book Encyclopedia:* "In general, people forget more and more as time passes. . . . You probably have had the experience of being unable to think of a name or some other piece of information that was on the tip of your tongue. . . . Such temporary loss of memory, which occurs frequently, is called retrieval failure. Scientists compare it to trying to find a misplaced object in a cluttered room. . . . A good way to ensure remembering a piece of information is to study it long after you think you know it perfectly." Diligent study and repetition will help us to recall God's reminders and comply with them for our own good.

7 We need Jehovah's reminders today more than ever before because wickedness has reached the greatest proportions in human history. If we pay attention to God's reminders,

4. How should we respond to God's reminders?
5. How can we come to love Jehovah's reminders exceedingly?
6. What is one reason why we need Jehovah's reminders, and what will help us to recall them?
7. Why are God's reminders needed today more than ever before?

The psalmist loved Jehovah's reminders exceedingly

we gain the insight needed to avoid being lured into the world's wicked ways. "More insight than all my teachers I have come to have," said the psalmist, "because your reminders are a concern to me. With more understanding than older men I behave, because I have observed your own orders. From every bad path I have restrained my feet, for the purpose that I may keep your word." (Psalm 119:99-101) By observing God's reminders, we will keep off "every bad path" and will avoid becoming like the masses of mankind, who are "in darkness mentally, and alienated from the life that belongs to God."—Ephesians 4:17-19.

8 God's reminders are also needed because they strengthen us to endure our many trials in this "time of the end." (Daniel 12:4) Without such reminders we would become 'forgetful hearers.' (James 1:25) But diligent personal and congregational study of the Scriptures with the help of publications from "the faithful and discreet slave" will assist us to meet tests of faith successfully. (Matthew 24:45-47) Such spiritual provisions enable us to see what we must do to please Jehovah when we find ourselves in trying circumstances.

The Vital Role of Our Meetings

9 Our need for God's reminders is met in part at Christian meetings, where instruction is provided by appointed brothers. The apostle Paul wrote that when Jesus "ascended on high he carried away captives; he gave gifts in men." Paul added: "[Christ] gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ." (Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12) How grateful we can be that these "gifts in men"—the appointed elders—direct our attention to Jehovah's reminders when we meet together for worship!

10 Gratitude for divine provisions will move us to be present at our five congregation meetings each week. The need to assemble together regularly was stressed by Paul. He wrote: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near."—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

11 Do you appreciate what our meetings do for us? The weekly *Watchtower* Study strengthens our faith, helps us to comply with Jeho-

8. How can we become better equipped to meet tests of faith successfully?

9. Who are the "gifts in men," and how do they help fellow believers?

10. What is the main point of Hebrews 10:24, 25?

11. How does each of our weekly meetings benefit us?

Following Anna's example, do you make it a point not to miss meetings?

vah's reminders, and fortifies us against "the spirit of the world." (1 Corinthians 2:12; Acts 15:31) At the Public Meeting, speakers present instruction from God's Word, including Jehovah's reminders and Jesus' wonderful "sayings of everlasting life." (John 6:68; 7:46; Matthew 5:1–7:29) Our teaching skills are honed at the Theocratic Ministry School. The Service Meeting is invaluable in helping us to improve our presentation of the good news from house to house, on return visits, at home Bible studies, and in other avenues of our ministry. A smaller group at the Congregation Book Study affords us greater opportunity to make expressions that often involve God's reminders.

12 Regular presence at congregation meetings serves to remind us of God's commandments and helps to keep us spiritually strong in the face of warfare, economic hardship, and other tests of our faith. The importance of the meetings was keenly felt by some 70 Christians in one Asian land who were displaced from their homes and compelled to live in the deep forest. Determined to continue meeting together regularly, they returned to their war-ravaged town, dismantled what remained of the Kingdom Hall, and rebuilt it in the jungle.

13 After enduring years of warfare in another part of the same country, Jehovah's people are still serving zealously. One of the elders in that area was asked: "What has been most helpful in keeping the brothers together?" His reply? "In 19 years, we have never missed a meeting. Sometimes because of bombing or other difficulties, some of the brothers could not get to the meeting place, but we never canceled a meeting." These dear brothers and sisters certainly appreciate the importance of 'not forsaking the gathering of themselves together.'

14 The 84-year-old widow Anna "was never missing from the temple." As a result, she was present when the infant Jesus was brought there shortly after his birth. (Luke 2:36-38) Do you make it a point not to miss meetings? Are you trying your best to be on hand for every session of our assemblies and conventions? The spiritually beneficial instruction received

12, 13. How have God's people in one Asian land manifested appreciation for Christian meetings?
14. What can we learn from the custom of elderly Anna?

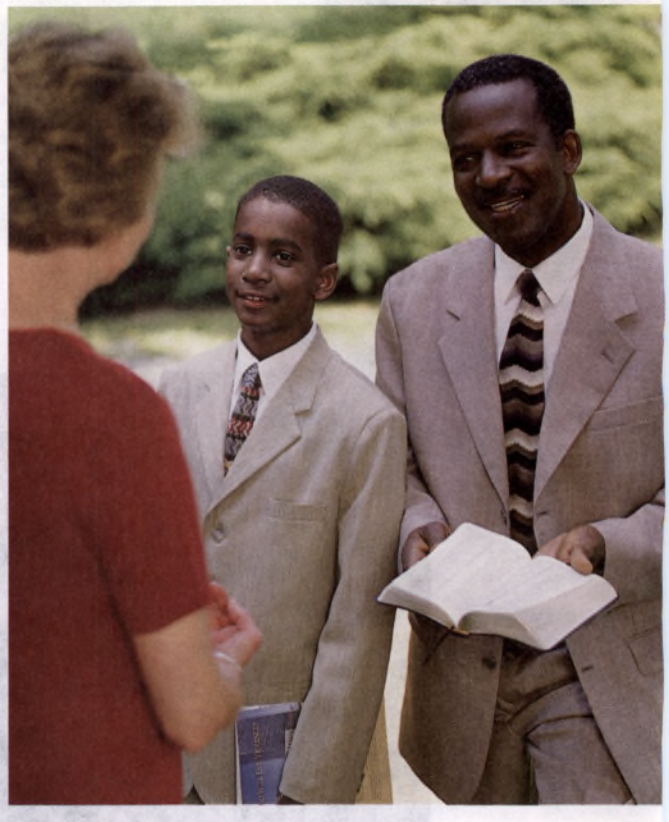
at these gatherings gives us clear evidence that our heavenly Father cares for his people. (Isaiah 40:11) Such occasions also promote joy, and our presence demonstrates our appreciation for Jehovah's reminders. —Nehemiah 8:5-8, 12.

Set Apart by Jehovah's Reminders

15 Observing God's reminders helps to set us apart from this wicked world. For instance, heeding God's reminders prevents us from engaging in sexual immorality. (Deuteronomy 5:18; Proverbs 6:29-35; Hebrews 13:4) Temptation to lie, to be dishonest, or to steal can be successfully suppressed by complying with divine reminders. (Exodus 20:15, 16; Leviticus 19:11; Proverbs 30:7-9; Ephesians 4:25, 28; Hebrews 13:18) Observing Jehovah's reminders also restrains us from taking vengeance, holding a grudge, or slandering anyone.—Leviticus 19:16, 18; Psalm 15:1, 3.

16 By heeding God's reminders, we remain sanctified, or set apart, for his service. And how important it is to be separate from this world! In prayer to Jehovah on the last night of his earthly life, Jesus made this plea for his followers: "I have given your word to them, but the world has hated them, because they are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. Sanctify them by means of the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:14-17) Let us continue to cherish God's Word, which sets us apart for his sacred service.

17 As Jehovah's servants, we want to remain acceptable for his service. If we were to ignore God's reminders, however, we could be overcome by this world's spirit, promoted in much of its speech, literature, entertainment, and conduct. And we certainly do not want to become lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, unthankful, disloyal, fierce, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God—to name only a few of the traits manifested by those alienated from God. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Since we are living deep in the last days of this wicked system of things, let us keep praying for divine help so that we can continue to observe Jehovah's reminders and thus 'keep on guard according to his word.'—Psalm 119:9.



Heeding Jehovah's reminders sets us apart as clean and acceptable for his service

15, 16. How does observing Jehovah's reminders affect our conduct?

17. What could happen if we ignored God's reminders, so what should we do?

[18] The reminders of Jehovah do more than alert us to things we must not do. Observing his reminders will cause us to take positive action, moving us to trust Jehovah implicitly and to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5; Psalm 4:5; Proverbs 3:5, 6; Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30) God's reminders also motivate us to love our neighbor. (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39) Especially do we display love of God and neighbor by doing the divine will and sharing with others the life-giving "knowledge of God." —Proverbs 2:1-5.

Observing Jehovah's Reminders Means Life!

[19] If we observe Jehovah's reminders and help others to do so, we will save ourselves and those who listen to us. (1 Timothy 4:16) How can we show others that heeding Jehovah's reminders really is practical and beneficial? By applying Bible principles in our own life. Those "rightly disposed for everlasting life" will thus have evidence that the course set out in God's Word is really the best one to pursue. (Acts 13:48) They will also see that 'God is really among us' and will be moved to join us in the worship of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. —1 Corinthians 14:24, 25.

[20] By continuing to study the Scriptures, applying what we learn, and taking full advantage of Jehovah's spiritual provisions, we will come to love his reminders exceedingly. If heeded, these reminders will help us to put on "the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Ephesians 4:20-24) Jehovah's reminders and his holy spirit will enable us to display love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control —qualities so unlike the traits of the world that is lying in Satan's power! (Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 John 5:19) Therefore, we can be grateful when we are reminded of Jehovah's requirements during our personal Bible study, by appointed elders, and at our meetings, assemblies, and conventions.

[21] Because we observe Jehovah's reminders, we are able to rejoice even when suffering for righteousness' sake. (Luke 6:22, 23) We look to God to save us out of the most threatening situations. That is especially important now that all nations are being gathered for "the war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon.—Revelation 16:14-16.

[22] If we are to receive the undeserved gift of everlasting life, we must love Jehovah's reminders exceedingly and observe them wholeheartedly. May we therefore have the spirit of the psalmist who sang: "The righteousness of your reminders is to time indefinite. Make me understand, that I may keep living." (Psalm 119:144) And may we display the determination evident in the psalmist's words: "I have called upon you [Jehovah]. O save me! And I will keep your reminders." (Psalm 119:146) Yes, by word and deed, let us prove that we really do love Jehovah's reminders exceedingly.

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18. Observing God's reminders will cause us to take what positive steps?

19. How can we show others that it is practical and beneficial to heed Jehovah's reminders?

20, 21. God's reminders and his spirit will enable us to do what?

22. What should be our determination regarding the reminders of Jehovah?

How Would You Answer?

- How did the psalmist view Jehovah's reminders?
- Why do we need God's reminders?
- What role do our meetings play with respect to divine reminders?
- How do Jehovah's reminders set us apart from this world?

HOW YOU CAN MAKE

Friends

"ONE FRIEND IN A LIFETIME IS MUCH; TWO ARE MANY; THREE ARE HARDLY POSSIBLE."

—Henry Brooks Adams.

SUCH a remark suggests that true friends are rare. All too often comments such as "I have no one to turn to," "I cannot trust anybody," or "My dog is my best friend" are heard from very lonely people groping for friendship.

To make and maintain lasting friendships is a challenge. A market survey revealed that "in the United States 25 per cent of the adult population suffer 'chronic loneliness' and . . . in France half the people have experienced acute isolation." The proliferation of dating clubs and computer chat rooms and the profusion of newspaper advertisements by those seeking companions indicate that people crave human contact.

Loneliness affects not only a person's mental state but also his physical health, claims Dr. David Weeks, a neuropsychologist. "I have a very high proportion of patients with anxiety phobias and depression who could be described as lonely. There are connections between the severity of depression and the severity of loneliness."

Divorce and the breakdown in family life doom more and more people to living life alone. A survey conducted in Britain concluded that by the beginning of the 21st century, as many as 30 percent of that nation's population would be in one-person households.

The inspired Scriptures foretold that a spirit of selfishness would be prevalent in "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) It appears that many are more interested in material possessions, such as a house or a car, or in their jobs than in cultivating relationships with other humans. Observes author Anthony Storr: "Instead of being centred

on spouse and children, their lives are based on the office."

TRUE FRIENDS ARE PRICELESS

The quality of your life depends much on the quality of your friendships. Often those who live for self are not happy because they have no friend with whom to share their things or their thoughts. True are the words of Jesus Christ: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) Echoing this truth, English poet George Byron wrote: "All who joy would win must share it."

What is a friend? A dictionary defines a friend as "one attached to another by affection or esteem." A true friend can help direct your thoughts toward good things. He can encourage and build you up in times of need. He can even share your grief. King Solomon said: "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress." (Proverbs 17:17) While material things often lose their value over time, true friendship grows and flourishes with time.

The Scriptures exhort Christians to "widen out" in their affections. (2 Corinthians 6:13) There is wisdom in reaching out to others. At Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2, we read: "Send out your bread upon the surface of the waters, for in the course of many days you will find it again. Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what calamity will occur on the earth." How does this principle apply to friendship? If you have cultivated friendships with many people, some of them may come to your aid when difficulties arise.

True friends are a protection for you in another way. "The wounds inflicted by a lover are faithful," says Proverbs 27:6. Although any number of people may give you words of praise, only true friends will think enough of you to point out a serious fault and offer constructive counsel in a loving way.—Proverbs 28:23.

Good, intimate friends are among those rare gifts that can produce a positive influence on you. In Acts chapter 10, we read of an event in the life of Roman army officer Cornelius, who had been informed by an angel that his prayers had been heard. In expectation of the visit of the apostle Peter, Cornelius "called together his relatives and intimate friends." Those close friends of Cornelius were among the first uncircumcised Gentiles to embrace the good news and be anointed by the holy spirit, with the prospect of ruling with Christ in God's Kingdom. What a blessing for Cornelius' intimate friends!—Acts 10:24, 44.

How, though, can you go about making friends? The Bible, which

has much to say about friendship, answers with practical advice. (See box below.)

WHERE YOU CAN MAKE TRUE FRIENDS

The best place to make true friends is in connection with the Christian congregation. First of all, you can avail yourself of the opportunity to make friends with Jehovah, your Creator and heavenly Father, and with Jesus Christ, your Savior. "No one has love greater than this, that someone should surrender his soul in behalf of his friends," said Jesus, who invites you to be his friend. (John 15:13, 15) By making friends with Jehovah and Jesus Christ, you can be assured that they will "receive you into the everlasting dwelling places." Yes, friendship with Jehovah and Jesus means everlasting life.—Luke 16:9; John 17:3.

How can you gain their warm friendship? The requirements for being a guest in Jehovah's tent as one of his friends are outlined in Psalm 15. Look it up in the Bible, and read the five verses of that psalm. Additionally, Jesus Christ said: "You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you."—John 15:14.

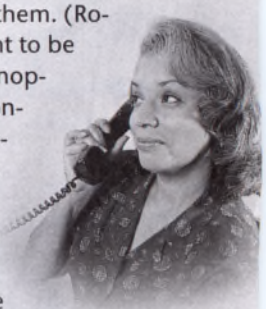
Yes, by conscientiously studying and applying the direction from God's Word, the Bible, you show that you want to be a friend of Jehovah and Jesus. To this end, you must also reg-

SIX STEPS TO A LASTING FRIENDSHIP

1. BE A FRIEND. Abraham was called "Jehovah's friend" because of his unwavering faith. (James 2:23) But there was an additional reason. The Bible says that Abraham demonstrated his affection for God. (2 Chronicles 20:7) He took the initiative and let his feelings be known to Jehovah. (Genesis 18:20-33) Yes, it takes initiative to offer proof of your friendship. Jesus said: "Practice giving, and people will give to you." (Luke 6:38) A word of encouragement or a helping hand may be the seed from which a great friendship will grow. American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "The only way to have a friend is to be one."

2. MAKE TIME TO CULTIVATE A FRIENDSHIP. Most people desire the benefits of friendship. Yet, they are too busy to invest the necessary time. Romans 12:15, 16 encourages us to share the happiness and success, the sorrows and disappointments, of others. It says: "Rejoice with people who rejoice; weep with people who weep. Be minded the same way toward others as to yourselves." Jesus Christ, though a busy man, always took time for his friends. (Mark 6:31-34) Remember, friendship, like a flowering plant, needs to be watered and nurtured for it to blossom—and that takes time.

3. PAY ATTENTION WHEN OTHERS TALK. Good, attentive listeners often find it easier to have friends. "Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking," says the disciple James. (James 1:19) When you converse with others, show personal interest in their feelings. Encourage them to talk about themselves. Take the lead in displaying honor to them. (Romans 12:10) Then they will want to be with you. Conversely, if you monopolize every conversation, or constantly put yourself in the limelight, you will have a hard time finding someone who is ready to listen or who cares about your feelings and needs.



4. BE FORGIVING. Jesus once told Peter to be ready to forgive "up to seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18:21, 22) A true friend is quick to overlook minor failings. To illustrate: Some do not like eating raspberries because of their little seeds. Those who enjoy this fruit, however, do not notice the seeds. True friends are loved for their fine qualities; their minor faults are overlooked. Paul exhorted us: "Continue putting up with one another and for-

ularly attend Christian meetings, where knowledge of Jehovah God is imparted. Faithfully apply yourself to listening to Jehovah, and you will draw closer to him and his Son.

At the meetings you can also get acquainted with individuals who love Jehovah and manifest the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control—in their life. (Galatians 5:22, 23) If you are serious about making friends and banishing loneliness, attend Christian meetings every week. Doing so puts you in the right place at the right time to cultivate lasting friendship with God's blessed people.

giving one another freely." (Colossians 3:13) Those who learn to be forgiving keep their friends.

5. RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS. Everyone needs some privacy, including your friends. Proverbs 25:17 wisely observes: "Make your foot rare at the house of your fellowman, that he may not have his sufficiency of you and certainly hate you." Hence, be reasonable about the frequency and length of visits with friends. Avoid possessiveness, which can lead to jealousy. Use good judgment when expressing personal tastes and opinions on matters. This contributes to a refreshing and welcome friendship.

6. BE GENEROUS. Friendships are cultivated through generosity. The apostle Paul's advice is to "be liberal, ready to share." (1 Timothy 6:18) For instance, share encouraging words with others. (Proverbs 11:25) Be free with sincere commendation and upbuilding speech. When you show genuine interest in the well-being of others, they are drawn to you. Think about what you can do for them instead of focusing on what they can do for you.

FRIENDS FOREVER

True friendship is a wonderful gift from Jehovah God. It stems from his own personality and makeup. Because of his loving and generous spirit, he has filled the earth with intelligent creatures with whom you can develop friendship. Associate with fellow Christians. Encourage them. Work with them in the ministry. Pray with and for them regularly. Then you will be imitating Jehovah and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Friendship is a gift everyone is able to give and to receive. In the near future, you will have the opportunity to widen out your circle of friends. You can make friends with millions now living, as well as with those from past generations who are sleeping in death, awaiting the resurrection when "death will be no more." (Revelation 21:4; John 5:28, 29) Make the effort now to be friendly, and make friends with those who love Jehovah. Pursue friendship with Jehovah God and Jesus Christ by listening to God's inspired Word. Then, for all eternity, you will never be lonely again.

"YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOUR LIFE WILL BE TOMORROW"

AS TOLD BY
HERBERT JENNINGS

"I was returning to the Watch Tower Society's branch office in Ghana from the port city of Tema and stopped to pick up a young man seeking a ride into town. I seized the opportunity to witness to him. I thought I was doing wonderfully well! However, when we reached this young man's destination, he leaped out of the truck and took off running."

THE foregoing incident was a clue to me that something unusual was unfolding in my life. Before I relate what happened, let me tell you how I, a Canadian, came to be in Ghana.

It was mid-December 1949 in a northern suburb of Toronto, Canada. We had just finished digging through several feet of frozen ground to provide water service to a new house. Cold and tired, our work crew huddled around a scrap-wood fire, waiting to be picked up by truck. Suddenly, Arnold Lorton, one of the workers, started saying something about "wars and rumors of wars," "the end of this world," and using other expressions totally unfamiliar to me. Everyone instantly seized up, became embarrassed, and some even showed hostility toward him. I remember thinking, 'This guy has a lot of courage! Nobody here wants to listen, and yet he continues.' But what he was saying struck a responsive chord in me. It was only a few years after World War II, and I had never heard such things in the Christadelphian religion that had been part of my family for several generations. I listened intently, caught up in his explanations.

It did not take me long to approach Arnold for more information. Looking back, I realize

just how tolerant and kind he and his wife, Jean, were to me, an inexperienced 19-year-old. I frequently arrived unannounced and uninvited at their home to talk with them. They put me on the right track and helped me sort out the conflict of standards and morals that was swirling through my young mind. Ten months after that initial experience by the roadside fire, I was baptized on October 22, 1950, as one of Jehovah's Witnesses and became associated with the Willowdale Congregation in North York, now part of Toronto.

Moving Ahead With Fellow Worshipers

Life at home became increasingly tense when my father realized that I was determined to pursue my newfound faith. Dad had recently been the victim of a head-on collision caused by a drunk driver and thus was often not the most agreeable person. Life was difficult for Mom, my two brothers, and my two sisters. The tension over Bible truth escalated. So it seemed prudent to me that I leave home for the sake of peace with my parents and to establish myself in "the way of the truth."—2 Peter 2:2.

By the late summer of 1951, I settled into a little congregation in Coleman, Alberta. Two young men, Ross Hunt and Keith Robbins, were there, busy in full-time public preaching, known as regular pioneering. They helped to direct me toward that same volunteer ministry. On March 1, 1952, I joined the ranks of regular pioneer ministers.

I remember with fondness the encouragement I received. I had a great deal to learn, and here was my proving ground. Later, after spending about a year in pioneer service with the Lethbridge Congregation, Alberta, I received an unexpected invitation to serve as a traveling overseer. I was to serve the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses scattered along the east coast of Canada from Moncton, New Brunswick, to Gaspé, Quebec.

At only 24 years of age and relatively new in the truth, I felt very inadequate, especially compared with the mature Witnesses I was to serve. I put forth a sincere effort in the next several months. Then came another surprise.

Gilead School and Off to the Gold Coast

In September 1955, I was invited to join about a hundred other students for the 26th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in South Lansing, New York. Five months of intensive training and study were exactly what I needed. My enthusiasm was fortified by being with such a highly motivated group. During this time, there was another development that has enriched my life to this day.

There was a certain young sister, Aileen Stubbs, among the students preparing for missionary activity. What I saw in Aileen was a certain stability, a no-nonsense practicalness, and a modest, cheerful disposition. I guess I frightened her when I clumsily declared my intentions. However, she did not run! By mutual agreement, Aileen would go to her missionary assignment in Costa Rica and I to mine in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), West Africa.

One morning in May 1956, I found myself in Brother Nathan Knorr's tenth-floor office in Brooklyn, New York. He was then president of the Watch Tower Society. I was being assigned as branch servant to supervise the preaching work in the Gold Coast, Togoland (now Togo), Ivory Coast (now Côte d'Ivoire), Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), and The Gambia.

I remember Brother Knorr's words as if spoken only yesterday. "You don't have to take over right away," he said. "Take your time; learn from the experienced brothers there. Then when you feel ready, you should begin to serve as the branch servant. . . . Here is your letter of appointment. Seven days from the time you arrive, you should take over."

'Just seven days,' I thought. 'Whatever happened to *"take your time"?'* I left that interview stunned.

The next few days passed in a blur. All too soon I was standing at the rail of a freighter, sailing along the East River past the Society's Brooklyn offices, beginning a 21-day ocean voyage to the Gold Coast.

Aileen and I kept the overseas mail services busy. We met again in 1958 and were married on August 23 of that year. I never fail to thank Jehovah for such a splendid partner.

For 19 years, I appreciated the privilege of serving alongside fellow missionaries and my African brothers and sisters at the Society's branch office. The Bethel family grew from just a handful to about 25 during that period. Those were challenging, eventful, and productive days for us. I must be candid, though. Personally, I found the hot, humid climate a particular challenge. It seemed that I was always perspiring, always clammy, and at times, irritable. Nevertheless, it was a real joy to serve, as our numbers in Ghana grew from just over 6,000 Kingdom publishers in 1956 to 21,000 in 1975. And it is doubly gratifying to see over 60,000 busy Witnesses there now.

A "Tomorrow" We Did Not Anticipate

About 1970, I began to experience a health problem that proved very difficult to identify. I had complete medical examinations, only to be told that I was "in good health." Then why did I always feel so unwell, so fatigued, so restless? Two things provided an answer, and they came as a shock. Indeed, as James wrote: "You do not know what your life will be tomorrow."—James 4:14.

The first clue was the experience with the young man I witnessed to while giving him a ride into town. Little did I realize that I was babbling on and on, talking faster and more intensely with each passing moment. When we reached this young man's destination, I was taken aback when he leaped out of the truck and took off running. Most Ghanaians are by nature an unruffled, calm lot, able to take almost anything in stride. His reaction just did not fit the picture. I sat there pondering. I realized I had a problem. Just what, I did not know. But I *definitely* had a problem.

Seeking solitude in my art studio

With my wife, Aileen

Second, after one particularly soul-searching discussion, Aileen suggested: "Well, if this problem is not physical, then it has to be mental." So I carefully wrote down all my symptoms and went to a psychiatrist. When I read off my list, his reply was: "This is a classic case. You are suffering from manic-depressive psychosis."

I was dumbstruck! There was a continual downward spiral as I endeavored to struggle on for the next couple of years. I kept searching for a solution. But no one really knew what to do. What a frustrating struggle it proved to be!

It had always been our intention to hold on to the privilege of full-time service as our vocation in life, and there was so much that needed to be done. I offered many a heartfelt and fervent prayer: "Jehovah, if you will, I 'shall live and also do this.' " (James 4:15) But it was not to be. So, facing reality, we arranged to leave Ghana and our many close friends and return to Canada in June 1975.

Jehovah Renders Aid Through His People

I soon learned that I was not indispensable, nor was my problem unique. The words of 1 Peter 5:9 came home to me: "[Know] that the same things in the way of sufferings are being accomplished in the entire association of your brothers in the world." Having grasped this, I began to discern how Jehovah did, indeed, support both of us in spite of this unwelcome change. How beautifully the 'association of brothers' came to our aid in a multitude of ways!

Although we did not have much materially, Jehovah did not abandon us. He moved our friends in Ghana to come to our aid materially and otherwise. With profound mixed emotions, we took our leave of those we had grown so fond of and turned to deal with this unexpected "tomorrow."

We were kindly taken in by Aileen's sister, Lenora, and her husband, Alvin Friesen, who generously provided for our needs over a number of months. A prominent psychiatrist made the confident prediction: "You will be back on your feet in six months." Perhaps that was said to instill confidence in me, but the prediction was not fulfilled even after six years. To this day, I cope with what is now politely referred to as bipolar mood disorder. A gentler name to be sure, but as those who suffer from it well know, a kinder name does not in any way ease the overwhelming symptoms of the disease.

By that time, Brother Knorr was already suffering from an illness that eventually led to his death in June of 1977. Even so, he found the time and energy to write me long, encouraging letters with words of comfort and counsel. I still treasure those letters. His words did much to quell the unreasonable feelings of failure that kept surfacing.

At the end of 1975, we had to relinquish our precious full-time service privileges and concentrate on stabilizing my health. Ordinary daylight hurt my eyes. Sudden sharp sounds reverberated like rifle shots. The milling of crowds overwhelmed me. It was a real struggle just to attend Christian meetings. Nevertheless, I was absolutely convinced of the value of spiritual association. To cope, I usually entered the Kingdom Hall after the crowd settled down and left just before it began to stir at the end of the program.

Sharing in the public ministry presented another great challenge. Sometimes, even after arriving at a house, I simply could not bring myself to the point of ringing the doorbell. I would not quit, however, because I realized that our ministry means salvation to ourselves and to any who respond favorably. (1 Timothy 4:16) After a while, I would be able to bring my emotions under control, go to the next door, and try again. By continuing to share in the ministry, I maintained reasonable spiritual health, and that increased my ability to cope.

Because of the chronic nature of bipolar mood disorder, I have come to realize that this disease will most likely be a fixture in my life during this present system of things. In 1981 an excellent series of articles appeared in *Awake!** By means of them, I began to comprehend better the nature of this illness and to learn more effective techniques for coping with it.

* See the articles "You Can Cope With Life," in the August 8, 1981, issue of *Awake!;* "How You Can Fight Depression," in the September 8, 1981, issue; and "Attacking Major Depression," in the October 22, 1981, issue.

At the "Everlasting Good News" Assembly held in Tema, Ghana, in 1963

Learning to Cope

All of this has not been without sacrifice and adjustment on my wife's part. If you are a caregiver in similar circumstances, you will likely appreciate her observations:

"A mood disorder appears to bring about an abrupt change in personality. Within a few hours, the sufferer can go from being a lively, encouraging individual with innovative plans and ideas to being an exhausted, negative, even angry, person. If not recognized as an illness, it could provoke in others feelings of exasperation and bewilderment. Obviously, plans have to be altered quickly, and a personal fight against feelings of disappointment or rejection begins."

As for me, when I feel extraordinarily well, I become apprehensive. I instinctively know that what follows a "high" is a plunge to a moody "low." In my case, "low" is preferable to a "high" because the low usually immobilizes me for a number of days, and I am not likely to get involved in anything unbalanced. Aileen helps greatly by warning me of being overstimulated and by comforting and supporting me when a dark mood overwhelms me.

There is a very real danger of becoming self-absorbed to the exclusion of all else when the disease is most active. One can completely shut everyone out when in a depressed mood or fail to be aware of the feelings and reactions of others during a manic episode. In the past, it was difficult for me to accept the evidence of my mental and emotional problem. I have had to battle with thinking that something external, such as a failed project or another person, was the problem. Time and again, I have had to remind myself, 'Nothing has changed around me. The problem is internal, not external.' Gradually, my thinking has become adjusted.

Over the years, both of us have learned to be open and honest with ourselves and others about my condition. We endeavor to maintain an optimistic attitude and not permit the disease to dominate our lives.

A Better "Tomorrow"

Through fervent prayers and many struggles, we have benefited from Jehovah's blessing and support. Both of us are now in our senior years. I am under regular medical supervision with a moderate but constant amount of medication, and I remain reasonably stable in health. We appreciate any privileges of service we can have. I continue to serve as a congregation elder. We always try to be supportive of others in the faith.

True, as James 4:14 says: "You do not know what your life will be tomorrow." That will be so as long as this system of things continues to exist. However, the words of James 1:12 also ring true: "Happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial, because on becoming approved he will receive the crown of life, which Jehovah promised to those who continue loving him." May all of us stand firm today and realize the blessings Jehovah holds out for tomorrow.

MUST YOU BELIEVE IT?

THE 12-year-old student was struggling to grasp the basic principles of algebra. His teacher presented the class with a seemingly straightforward algebraic calculation.

"Let $x=y$ and let them both have the value of 1," he began.

'So far so good,' thought the student.

After four lines of what looked like logical calculation, however, the teacher produced a startling result: "Therefore, 2=1!"

"Disprove that," he challenged his bemused students.

With his very limited knowledge of algebra, the young student could not see how to disprove it. Every step in the calculation looked perfectly valid. Should he, then, believe this strange conclusion? After all, his teacher was much more versed in mathematics than he was. Of course he should not! 'I do not have to disprove this,' he thought to himself. 'Common sense tells me that this is absurd.' (Proverbs 14:15, 18) He knew that neither his teacher nor any of his classmates were going to exchange two dollars for one!

In time the algebra student did find the flaw in the computation. Meanwhile, the experience taught him a valuable lesson. Even when someone with vastly superior knowledge presents a carefully crafted and seemingly unassailable argument, a listener need not believe a foolish conclusion simply because he cannot disprove it at the time. The student was actually following a very practical Bible principle found at 1 John 4:1—not to believe too quickly everything you hear, even when it appears to come from an authoritative source.

This does not mean that you should stubbornly stick to preconceived ideas. It is a mistake to close your mind to information that could adjust mistaken views. But neither should you be "quickly shaken from your reason" in the face of pressure from someone who claims to have great knowledge or authority. (2 Thessalonians 2:2) The teacher, of course, was merely playing a trick on his students. Sometimes, though, things are not so innocent. People can be extremely "cunning in contriving error."—Ephesians 4:14; 2 Timothy 2:14, 23, 24.

Are Experts Always Right?

However knowledgeable they may be, experts in any field may have conflicting ideas and shifting opinions. Take, for example, the ongoing debate in medical science on something as basic as causes of illness. "The relative importance of nature versus nurture in illness forms the fabric of heated debate among scientists," writes a professor of medicine at Harvard University. Those in what has been called the determinist camp believe strongly that our genes play a decisive role in our susceptibility to various diseases. Others, however, contend that the environment and life-style are the major factors in human pathology. Both sides are quick to cite studies and statistics to support their case. Nonetheless, the debate continues.

The most renowned of thinkers have been proved wrong again and again, even though what they taught seemed at the time to be beyond dispute. Philosopher Bertrand Russell described Aristotle as one of "the most influential of all philosophers." Yet, Russell also

pointed out that many of Aristotle's doctrines were "wholly false." "Throughout modern times," he wrote, "practically every advance in science, in logic, or in philosophy has had to be made in the teeth of opposition from Aristotle's disciples."—*History of Western Philosophy.*

"The Falsely Called 'Knowledge'"

The early Christians likely met many who were disciples of the noted Greek philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Educated people of the day regarded themselves as intellectually superior to most of the Christians. Not many of Jesus' disciples were considered "wise in a fleshly way." (1 Corinthians 1:26) In fact, those schooled in the philosophies of the day thought that what the Christians believed was simply "foolishness" or "sheer nonsense."—1 Corinthians 1:23; *Phillips.*

If you were among those early Christians, would you have been impressed by the persuasive arguments of the intellectual elite of the day or overawed by their display of wisdom? (Colossians 2:4) There would have been no reason for that, according to the apostle Paul. He reminded Christians that Jehovah views "the wisdom of the wise men" and the "intelligence of the intellectual men" of the day as foolish. (1 Corinthians 1:19) "What," he asked, "have the philosopher, the writer and the critic of this world to show for all their wisdom?" (1 Corinthians 1:20, *Phillips*) Despite all their intellectual brilliance, the philosophers, the writers, and the critics of Paul's day had produced no real answer to mankind's problems.

So Christians learned to avoid what the apostle Paul said were "the contradictions of the falsely called 'knowledge.'" (1 Timothy 6:20) The reason that Paul called such knowledge 'false' is that it lacked one crucial factor —a source or reference from God against which their theories could be tested. (Job 28:12; Proverbs 1:7) Lacking that, and at the same time being blinded by the archdeceiver, Satan, those clinging to such knowledge could never hope to find the truth.—1 Corinthians 2:6-8, 14; 3:18-20; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14; Revelation 12:9.

The Bible—An Inspired Guide

The early Christians never doubted that God had revealed his will, purpose, and principles in the Scriptures. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) This protected them from being 'carried off as prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men.' (Colossians 2:8) The situation is the same today. In contrast with the confusing and conflicting opinions of men, God's inspired Word provides a solid foundation on which we can base our beliefs. (John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21) Without it we are left in the impossible situation of trying to build something solid on the shifting sands of human theories and philosophies.—Matthew 7:24-27.

'But wait,' someone might say. 'Is it not true that the facts of science have shown the Bible to be in error and therefore no more dependable than the ever-changing philosophies of men?' Bertrand Russell claimed, for example, that "Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo had to combat Aristotle *as well as the Bible* in establishing the view that the earth is not the centre of the universe." (Italics ours.) And is it not true that today, for example, creationists insist that the Bible teaches that the earth was created in six 24-hour days, when all the facts show that the earth itself is billions of years old?

Actually, the Bible does not say that the earth is the center of the universe. That was a teaching of church leaders who themselves

did not adhere to God's Word. The Genesis account of creation allows for the earth to be billions of years old and does not limit each creative day to 24 hours. (Genesis 1:1, 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:3, 4) An honest appraisal of the Bible shows that while it is not a science textbook, it certainly is not "sheer nonsense." It is, in fact, in complete harmony with proven science.*

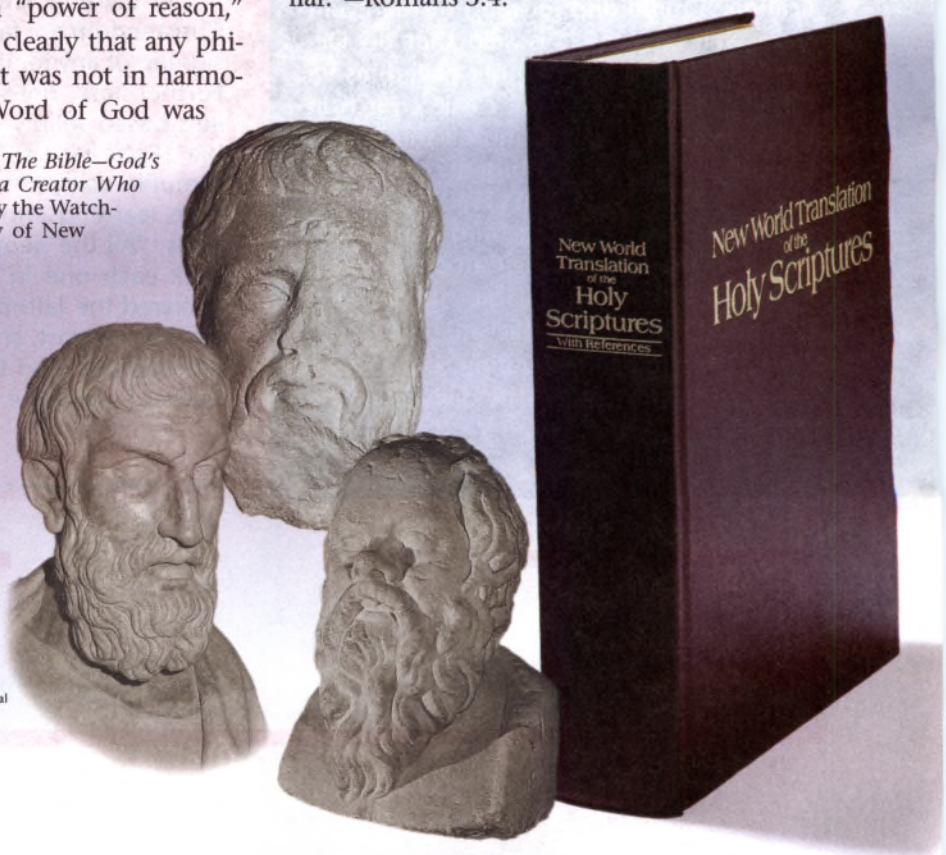
The "Power of Reason"

Although many of Jesus' disciples were simple men and women, possibly with limited education, they did have another God-given asset at their disposal. Regardless of their background, all were endowed with reasoning power and thinking abilities. The apostle Paul encouraged his fellow Christians to make full use of their "power of reason" to "prove to [themselves] the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."—Romans 12:1, 2.

With their God-given "power of reason," the early Christians saw clearly that any philosophy or teaching that was not in harmony with the revealed Word of God was useless. In some cases the wise men of their day were, in fact, "suppressing the truth" and ignoring the evidence around them that there is a God. "Although asserting they were wise, they became foolish," wrote the apostle Paul. Because they rejected the truth about God and his purpose, "they became empty-headed in their reasonings and their unintelligent heart became darkened."—Romans 1: 18-22; Jeremiah 8:8, 9.

Those who assert that they are wise often come up with conclusions like "There is no God" or "The Bible is not to be trusted" or "These are not the 'last days.'" Such ideas are just as foolish in God's eyes as concluding that "2=1." (1 Corinthians 3:19) Whatever authority people may arrogate to themselves, you do not have to accept their conclusions if they contradict God, ignore his Word, and violate common sense. In the final analysis, the wise course is always to "let God be found true, though every man be found a liar."—Romans 3:4.

* For details, see the books *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* and *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



In contrast with the shifting opinions of men, the Bible provides a solid basis for belief

Left, Epicurus: Photograph taken by courtesy of the British Museum; upper middle, Plato: National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece; right, Socrates: Roma, Musei Capitolini

RELIGIOUS UNITY IN SIGHT?

"We are witnessing a significant day in the history of our churches," said Christian Krause, president of the Lutheran World Federation. Similarly, Pope John Paul II spoke of "a milestone on the uneasy road for the reconstruction of full unity among Christians."

These enthusiastic proclamations were prompted by the signing of an Official Common Statement on October 31, 1999, in Augsburg, Germany, confirming the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Timing and location of the event were well chosen. It is said that on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, thereby setting off the Protestant Reformation. Augsburg, of course, was where the Lutherans in 1530 presented their basic tenet, the Augsburg Confession, which was rejected by the Catholic Church, leading to the irreconcilable rift between Protestantism and Catholicism.

Will the Joint Declaration be a decisive step in overcoming the division of the church, as it is claimed? Not all parties were optimistic. Over 250 Protestant theologians signed an opposing petition, warning against being taken over by the Catholic Church. Protestants were also irritated when the Catholic Church declared a special indulgence for the year 2000, the very practice that precipitated the rift some 500 years ago. And since both the Augsburg Confession and the Catholic rebuttal by the Council of Trent are still in place, unity is far from ensured.

The division and disagreement within Christendom are far greater than what the signing of any joint declaration can mend. Furthermore, unity in faith hinges on beliefs based solidly on God's Word, the Bible. (Ephesians 4:3-6) Rather than coming through compromise, true unity comes from learning and doing what God asks of us. "All the peoples, for their part, will walk each one in the name of its god," declared the faithful prophet Micah, "but we, for our part, shall walk in the name of Jehovah our God to time indefinite, even forever."—Micah 4:5.

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