

A woman stands on a rocky shore, looking out at the ocean under a dramatic sunset sky with a rainbow in the upper left. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light.

OCTOBER 1, 2010

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Seven Things
You Need to Know
About **Prayer**

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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FROM OUR COVER

Seven Things You Need to Know About Prayer

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PRAYER. There are few Bible subjects that elicit so much interest and curiosity. Consider seven commonly asked questions about prayer; then join us in examining the answers provided in the Bible. These articles are designed to help you to pray—to begin praying or to make your prayers more effective.



1 PRAYER

Why?

AROUND the world, in every culture and religion, people pray. They pray when alone; they pray in groups. They pray in churches, in temples, in synagogues, in mosques, at shrines. They may use prayer rugs, rosary beads, prayer wheels, icons, prayer books, or prayers written on small boards that they hang on racks.

Prayer sets humans apart from all other life on this earth. Granted, we have much in common with the animals. Like them, we need food, air, and water. Like them, we are born, we live, and we die. (Ecclesiastes 3:19) But only humans pray. Why?

Perhaps the simplest answer is that we need to. Prayer, after all, is generally seen as a way for people to reach out to the spirit realm, to something they view as holy, or sacred, and eternal. The Bible shows that we were made with an appetite for such things. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) Jesus Christ once said: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.”—Matthew 5:3.

A “spiritual need”—how else could one explain all those religious edifices and artifacts, all those countless hours spent in prayer? Of course, some people look to themselves or to their fellow humans to fill spiritual needs.

Do you not sense, though, that humans are just too limited to help adequately? We are so frail, short-lived, shortsighted. Only someone far wiser, more powerful, more *enduring* than we are can give us what we need. And just what are these spiritual needs that drive us to pray?

Consider: Have you ever yearned for guidance, wisdom, or answers to questions that seem beyond the reach of human knowledge? Have you ever felt in need of comfort when wounded by a terrible loss, of guidance when faced with an agonizing decision, or of forgiveness when crushed by guilt?

According to the Bible, those are all valid reasons to pray. The Bible is the most reliable book on this subject, and it contains a record of the prayers of many faithful men and women. They prayed for comfort, for guidance, for forgiveness, and for answers to the hardest of questions.—Psalm 23:3; 71:21; Daniel 9:4, 5, 19; Habakkuk 1:3.

Such prayers, varied though they were, had something in common. The ones praying each possessed a vital key to successful prayer, one that is often lost or disregarded in today’s world. They knew to whom prayers should be directed.

2

PRAYER

To Whom?

DO ALL prayers go to the same place, regardless of who is being addressed? In today's world, it is often popular to assume so. The notion appeals to many who favor interfaith movements and want all religions to be acceptable, despite their differences. Is it possible, though, that the idea is untrue?

The Bible teaches that a great many prayers are, in fact, misdirected. Back when the Bible was written, it was common for people to direct their prayers to carved images. Yet, God repeatedly warned against that practice. For example, Psalm 115:4-6 says about idols: "Ears they have, but they cannot hear." The point is clear. Why pray to a god who will never hear you?

A vivid Bible account enlarges on this point. The true prophet Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to pray to their god, after which Elijah would pray to his. Elijah said that the true God would answer and the false one would not. Accepting the challenge, the Baal prophets prayed long and

hard, even with loud outcries—but to no avail! The account reads: "There was no one answering, and there was no paying of attention." (1 Kings 18:29) How, though, did Elijah fare?

After Elijah prayed, his God answered instantly, sending fire from heaven to consume an offering that Elijah had set out. What was the difference? There is one vital clue in Elijah's prayer itself, recorded at 1 Kings 18:36, 37. It is a very short prayer—there are only about 30 words in the original Hebrew. Yet, in those few lines, Elijah three times addressed God by his personal name, Jehovah.

Baal, meaning "owner" or "master," was the god of the Canaanites, and there were many local versions of this deity. Jehovah, however, is a unique name, applying only to one Personage in all the universe. This God told his people: "I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory."—Isaiah 42:8.

Did Elijah's prayer and the prayers of those Baal prophets go to the same place? Baal worship degraded people with ritual prostitution and even human sacrifice. In contrast, the worship of Jehovah ennobled his people, Israel, freeing them from such degrading practices. So think about it: If you specifically addressed a letter to a highly respected friend, would you expect it to be delivered to someone who did not bear your friend's name and whose vile reputation



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Elijah's challenge to the Baal prophets proved that all prayers do not go to the same place

contradicted everything your friend stood for? Surely not!

If you pray to Jehovah, you are praying to the Creator, the Father of mankind.* “You, O Jehovah, are our Father,” said the prophet Isaiah in prayer. (Isaiah 63:16) This, then, is the very One about whom Jesus Christ spoke when he told his followers: “I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.” (John 20:17) Jehovah is Jesus’ Father. He is the God to whom Jesus prayed and to whom Jesus taught his followers to pray.—Matthew 6:9.

Does the Bible instruct us to pray to Jesus,

* Some religious traditions say that it is wrong to pronounce God’s personal name, even in prayer. However, that name appears some 7,000 times in the Bible’s original languages, in many cases within the prayers and psalms of faithful servants of Jehovah.

to Mary, to saints, or to angels? No—only to Jehovah. Consider two reasons why. First, prayer is a form of worship, and the Bible says that worship should go exclusively to Jehovah. (Exodus 20:5) Second, the Bible reveals that he bears the title “Hearer of prayer.” (Psalm 65:2) Although Jehovah delegates generously, this is a responsibility he has never passed on to anyone. He is the God who promises to hear our prayers personally.

So if you want your prayers to be heard by God, remember this Scriptural admonition: “Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.” (Acts 2:21) But does Jehovah hear all prayers unconditionally? Or is there anything else we need to know if we want our prayers to Jehovah to be heard?

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3

PRAYER

How?

WHEN it comes to prayer, many religious traditions focus on physical issues, such as posture, wording, and ritual. However, the Bible helps us to set such issues aside and focus on more important aspects of the question, “How should we pray?”

The Bible depicts faithful servants of God as praying in many settings and postures. They prayed silently or aloud as the circumstances dictated. They prayed while looking up at the sky or while bowing down. Rather than using images, beads, or prayer books as aids in prayer, they simply prayed from the heart in their own words. What made their prayers effective?

As mentioned in the preceding article, they directed their prayers only to one God—Jehovah. There is another important factor. We read at 1 John 5:14: “This is the confidence that we have toward him, that, no matter what it is that we ask *according to his will*, he hears us.” Our prayers need to be in harmony with God’s will. What does that mean?

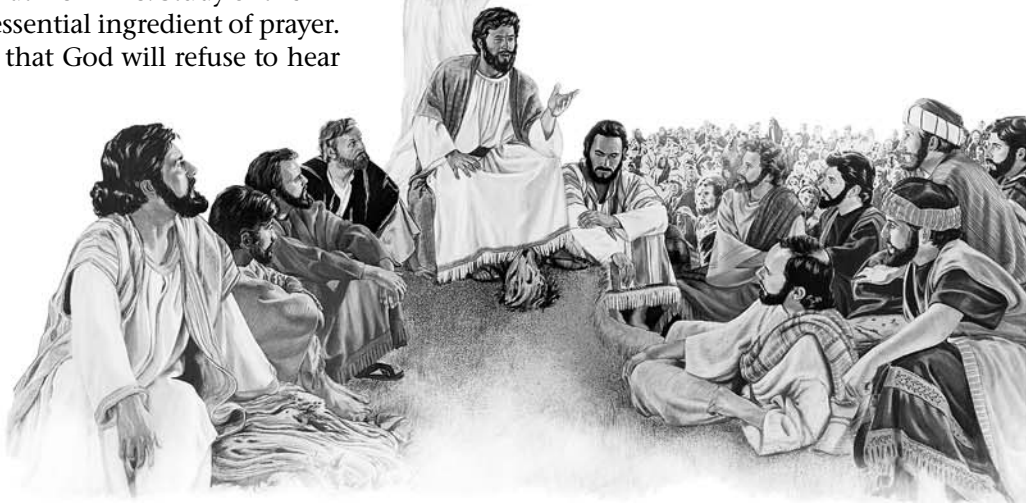
To pray in harmony with God’s will, we need to know what his will is. Study of the Bible, then, is an essential ingredient of prayer. Does this mean that God will refuse to hear

us unless we are Bible scholars? No, but God expects us to look for his will, seeking to understand it and to act on it. (Matthew 7:21-23) We need to pray in harmony with what we learn.

As we learn about Jehovah and his will, we grow in faith—another vital factor in prayer. Jesus said: “All the things you ask in prayer, *having faith*, you will receive.” (Matthew 21:22) Faith does not mean gullibility. Rather, it means believing in something that even though unseen, is supported by very strong evidence. (Hebrews 11:1) The Bible is packed with evidence that Jehovah, whom we cannot see, is real, is reliable, and is willing to answer the prayers of those who have faith in him. Furthermore, we can always ask for more faith, and Jehovah loves to give us what we need.—Luke 17:5; James 1:17.

Here is yet another essential aspect of how to pray. Jesus said: “No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) So Jesus is the means of our approach to the Fa-

Effective prayers are in harmony with God’s will, are offered in faith, and are presented in Jesus’ name



ther, Jehovah. Thus, Jesus told his followers to pray in his name. (John 14:13; 15:16) That does not mean that we should pray to Jesus. Rather, we pray *in the name of* Jesus, remembering that Jesus is the reason that we are able to approach our perfect and holy Father.

Jesus' closest followers once asked him: "Lord, teach us how to pray." (Luke 11:1) Evidently, they were not asking about such basics as we have just discussed. They really wanted to know about content—in effect saying, 'What should we pray about?'

4

PRAYER

What About?

IT HAS been called the most widely repeated of all Christian prayers. Whether that is true or not, Jesus' model prayer—sometimes called the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father—is certainly among the most misunderstood. Millions of people utter its words by rote every day, perhaps often during the day. But Jesus never intended for the prayer to be used in that way. How do we know?

Just before relating that prayer, Jesus said:

"When praying, do not say the same things over and over again." (Matthew 6:7) Did Jesus proceed to contradict himself by laying down a set of words to be memorized and repeated? Surely not! Rather, Jesus was teaching us what to pray about, and he was giving us a clear set of priorities to keep in mind when praying. Let us take a closer look at what he said. The prayer is recorded at Matthew 6:9-13.

"Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified."

Jesus thus reminded his followers that all prayers should be directed to his Father, Jehovah. But do you know why God's name is so important and why it needs to be sanctified, or made holy?

From the beginning of human history, God's sacred name has been smeared with lies. God's adversary, Satan, has called Jehovah a lying, selfish Ruler who has no real right to govern His creations. (Genesis 3:1-6) Many have sided with Satan, teaching that God is cold, cruel, and vindictive or denying that He is the Creator at all. Others have even attacked his name itself, removing the name Jehovah from Bible translations and forbidding the use of it.

The Bible shows that God will rectify all these injustices. (Ezekiel 39:7) By doing so, he will address your every need and problem as well. How so? The next words in Jesus' prayer provide the answer.

"Let your kingdom come."

Today, there is much confusion among religious teachers about God's Kingdom. But as Jesus' listeners knew, God's prophets had long foretold that the Messiah, a Savior chosen by God, would rule a Kingdom that would change the world. (Isaiah 9:6, 7;



Daniel 2:44) It will sanctify God's name by exposing Satan's lies and then overthrowing Satan and all his works. God's Kingdom will put an end to war, sickness, famine—even death itself. (Psalm 46:9; 72:12-16; Isaiah 25:8; 33:24) When you pray for God's Kingdom to come, you are praying for all those promises to come true.

“Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.”

Jesus' words suggest that God's will is just as certain to take place on earth as it is in heaven, where God dwells. God's will has proved unstoppable in heaven; there, God's Son waged war against Satan and his cohorts, casting them down to the earth. (Revelation 12:9-12) This third petition of the model prayer, like the first two, helps us to keep our focus on what matters most—not our own will, but God's. It is his will that always brings about the greatest good for all creation. Thus, even the perfect man Jesus said to his Father: “Let, not my will, but yours take place.”—Luke 22:42.

“Give us today our bread.”

Jesus next showed that our prayers do not have to be entirely selfless. There is nothing wrong with praying to God about our daily, practical needs. In fact, doing so reminds us that Jehovah is the one who “gives to all persons life and breath and all things.” (Acts 17:25) The Bible reveals that he is a loving parent who delights in giving his children what they need. Like a good parent, though, he will not grant requests that violate their best interests.

“Forgive us our debts.”

Do you really owe a debt to God? Do you need his forgiveness? Many today have lost sight of the reality and seriousness of sin. But the Bible teaches that sin is at the root of our worst troubles, for it is the basic cause of death in humans. Born in sin, we all sin frequently, and our only hope for a lasting future lies in God's forgiveness. (Romans 3:23; 5:12; 6:23) It is a relief to learn that the Bible says: “You, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive.”—Psalm 86:5.

“Deliver us from the wicked one.”

Do you realize how urgently, how desperately, you need God's protection? Many refuse to believe that “the wicked one,” Satan, exists at all. But Jesus taught that Satan is real, even calling him “the ruler of this world.” (John 12:31; 16:11) Satan has corrupted this world over which he holds sway, and he is just as eager to corrupt you, to keep you from developing a close relationship with your Father, Jehovah. (1 Peter 5:8) However, Jehovah is far stronger than Satan and is delighted to protect those who love Him.

That quick summary of the main points of Jesus' model prayer does not cover every subject that is fit for prayer. Remember, 1 John 5:14 tells us about God: “No matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he

hears us.” So do not worry that your troubles are too trivial to bring before God.—1 Peter 5:7.

What, though, about time and place? Does it matter when and where we pray?

5

PRAYER

Does It Matter Where and When?

NO DOUBT you have observed that most organized religions emphasize elaborate houses of prayer and prescribe specific times of day when prayers should be offered. Does the Bible limit our prayers to certain places and times?

The Bible does show that there are fitting occasions for prayer. Before eating with his followers, for example, Jesus thanked God in prayer. (Luke 22:17) And when his disciples assembled for worship, they prayed together. They thus continued a practice that had long been carried out in Jewish synagogues and in the temple at Jerusalem. God intended the temple to be “a house of prayer for all the nations.”—Mark 11:17.

When servants of God assemble and pray together, their petitions can be effective. If the group is united in spirit and the prayer offered in their behalf reflects Scriptural principles, God is pleased. The prayer may even move him to do what he might not otherwise have done. (Hebrews 13:18, 19) Jehovah’s Witnesses pray regularly at their meetings. You are cordially invited to come to a Kingdom Hall near you and hear such prayers for yourself.

However, the Bible does not limit prayer to any particular time or place. In the Bible, we find a record of God’s servants praying anytime, anywhere. Jesus said: “When you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you.”—Matthew 6:6.

Is that not an inviting prospect? You can actually approach the Sovereign of the universe anytime, in complete privacy, and be assured that you will have his attention. Little wonder, then, that Jesus often sought to be alone in order to pray! Once, he spent an entire night in prayer to God, evidently seeking guidance on a most important decision.—Luke 6:12, 13.

Other men and women in the Bible record prayed when faced with weighty decisions or daunting challenges. Sometimes they prayed aloud and sometimes silently; they prayed when in groups and when alone. The important thing is that they prayed. God even invites his servants: “Pray incessantly.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) He is willing to listen endlessly to those who do his will. Is that not a loving invitation?

Of course, in today’s cynical world, many wonder about the practical value of prayer. You may ask, ‘Will it really help me?’

We may pray anytime
and anywhere



Will It Help?

DOES praying do us any good? The Bible shows that yes, the prayers of faithful servants of God really do benefit them. (Luke 22:40; James 5:13) In fact, praying can do us a world of good spiritually, emotionally, and even physically. How so?

Well, let us say that you have a child who receives a gift. Would you teach him that it is enough to *feel* grateful? Or would you teach him to *express* his gratitude? When we put important feelings into words, we bring them into focus and even strengthen them. Does the same hold true when it comes to speaking to God? Absolutely! Consider some examples.

Prayers of thanks. When we thank our Father for the good things that come our way, we focus on our blessings. As a result, we may feel more grateful, happier, more positive.—Philippians 4:6.

Example: Jesus expressed gratitude for the way his Father heard and responded to his prayers.—John 11:41.

Prayers for forgiveness. When we ask God for forgiveness, we strengthen our conscience, deepen our repentance, and intensify our awareness of the seriousness of sin. We also find relief from the burden of guilt.

Example: David prayed to express repentance and sorrow.—Psalm 51.

Prayers for guidance and wisdom. Asking Jehovah to guide us or to grant us the wisdom

we need to make good decisions can help us to be genuinely humble. It can remind us of our limitations and help build our trust in our heavenly Father.—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Example: Solomon humbly asked for guidance and wisdom in ruling over Israel.—1 Kings 3:5-12.

Prayers of distress. If we pour out our heart to God when we are in emotional turmoil, our heart will be soothed and we will lean on Jehovah instead of ourselves.—Psalm 62:8.

Example: King Asa prayed when facing an overwhelming foe.—2 Chronicles 14:11.

Prayers for the well-being of others in need. Such prayers help us to combat selfishness and to grow in compassion and empathy.

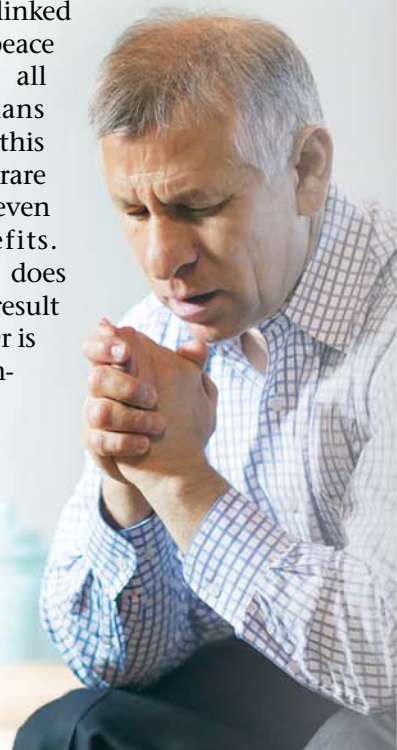
Example: Jesus prayed in behalf of his followers.—John 17:9-17.

Prayers of praise. When we praise Jehovah for his wonderful works and qualities, our respect and appreciation for him will grow. Such prayers may also help us to draw closer to our God and Father.

Example: David warmly praised God for his creation.—Psalm 8.

Another blessing linked with prayer is “the peace of God that excels all thought.” (Philippians 4:7) Finding calm in this troubled world is a rare blessing indeed. It even has physical benefits. (Proverbs 14:30) But does it come solely as a result of our own efforts? Or is something more important involved?

Prayer offers many benefits—physical, emotional and, above all, spiritual



Will God Hear and Answer?

THE above question elicits a great deal of excitement and curiosity. The Bible shows that Jehovah *does* listen to prayers today. Whether he hears ours or not is largely up to us.

Jesus denounced religious leaders in his day who prayed hypocritically; they cared only about making a show of their piety. He said that such men would have “their reward in full,” meaning that they would receive only what they wanted most, the attention of men, but not what they needed, God’s hearing ear. (Matthew 6:5) Likewise today, many pray according to their own will and not God’s. Ignoring the Bible principles that we have discussed, they do not get God’s hearing ear.

What, though, about you? Will God hear and respond to your prayers? The answer does not depend on your race, nationality, or social standing. The Bible assures us: “God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34, 35) Do those words describe you? If you fear God, you hold him in the highest regard, fearing to displease him. If you work righteousness, you seek to do what God says is right rather than following your own will or that of your fellow humans. Do you really want God to listen to your prayers? The Bible directs you to your goal.*

Of course, many want God to answer their prayers with a miracle. Even in Bible times,

* For more information about how to pray and be heard by God, see chapter 17 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

though, God rarely performed such wonders. Sometimes centuries passed between one recorded miracle and the next. Further, the Bible indicates that the age of miracles ended after the days of the apostles. (1 Corinthians 13:8-10) Does this mean, then, that God does not answer prayers today? Far from it! Consider some prayers that he answers.

God grants wisdom. Jehovah is the ultimate Source of all true wisdom. He is generous with it, sharing it freely with those who want his guidance and who seek to live by it. —James 1:5.

God gives his holy spirit and all of its benefits. Holy spirit is God’s active force. There is no force stronger. It can help us to endure trials. It can fill us with peace when we are troubled. It can help us to cultivate other beautiful and endearing qualities. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Jesus assured his followers that God gives this gift generously.—Luke 11:13.

God enlightens those who earnestly seek him. (Acts 17:26, 27) Around the world, there are people who sincerely seek the truth. They want to know about God—what his name is, what his purpose is for the earth and humankind, how they can draw close to him. (James 4:8) Jehovah’s Witnesses often meet people like that and are delighted to share the Bible’s answers to such questions.

Is that why you have obtained this magazine? Are you looking for God? Perhaps this is how he is answering your prayer.



DID YOU KNOW?

Why does the Bible book of 1 Corinthians discuss meat that had been sacrificed to idols?

■ The apostle Paul wrote: “Everything that is sold in a meat market keep eating, making no inquiry on account of your conscience.” (1 Corinthians 10:25) Where did such meat come from?

Animal sacrifice was the principal ceremony in Greek and Roman temples, but not all the meat from the sacrificial animals was eaten during the ceremony. Excess meat from pagan temples found its way into public meat markets. The book *Idol Meat in Corinth* states: “Cult officials . . . are called in other contexts cooks and/or butchers. From their allotted portion for slaying the sacrificial animal, they sold meat in the market.”

Thus, not all the meat sold in the market was left over from religious ceremonies. Excavation in Pompeii’s meat market (Latin, *macellum*) revealed the presence of entire skeletons of sheep. This suggests, says scholar Henry J. Cadbury, that “the meat may have been sold on the hoof or slaughtered in the *macellum* as well as sold already butchered or sacrificed in a temple.”

Paul’s point was that, although Christians would not share in pagan worship, meat that had been sacrificed in a temple was not intrinsically contaminated.



CERAMIC PLATTER
DEPICTING ANIMAL
SACRIFICE, SIXTH
CENTURY B.C.E.
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Why did a breach exist between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus’ day?

■ John 4:9 says that “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” The roots of this separation seem to date back to when Jeroboam established idol worship in the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. (1 Kings 12:26-30) Samaritans were from Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. When the ten tribes fell to the Assyrians in 740 B.C.E., the conquerors settled pagan foreigners in Samaria. Mixed marriages between these settlers and the local people evidently resulted in further corruption of the Samaritans’ worship.

Centuries later, the Samaritans opposed the efforts of Jewish returnees

from the Babylonian exile to rebuild Jehovah’s temple and Jerusalem’s city walls. (Ezra 4:1-23; Nehemiah 4:1-8) Religious rivalry was heightened when the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim, likely in the fourth century B.C.E.

In Jesus’ day, the term “Samaritan” carried more of a religious than a geographic connotation and referred to an adherent of the sect that flourished in Samaria. The Samaritans still worshipped on Mount Gerizim, and the Jews had a scornful, disrespectful attitude toward them.—John 4:20-22; 8:48.



JEROBOAM
ESTABLISHED
IDOL WORSHIP

OUR READERS ASK . . .

Do Jehovah's Witnesses practice faith healing?

■ Jehovah's Witnesses have never practiced faith healing. Like Jesus, they believe that their primary mission is to preach the good news about God's Kingdom. They also believe that true Christians are identified, not by faith healing, but by something of far greater importance.

To be sure, the compassionate healing of the sick in the first century C.E. by Jesus Christ is of great significance to all of us. He thereby furnished a guarantee that under his rule as King of God's Kingdom, "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isaiah 33:24.

What, though, about today? Faith healers in Christendom as well as in some non-Christian religions claim to perform miraculous healings. Yet, Jesus himself sternly warned against individuals who would claim to have "performed many miracles" in his name. He would say to them: "I never knew you. Get away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:22, 23, *International Standard Version*) So, are the supposed miracles of modern-day faith healers really an indication of God's approval or blessing?

Consider what the Bible says about the healings performed by Jesus. By comparing that Scriptural record with the methods of faith healers today, we can readily determine whether modern-day faith healing is from God.

Jesus never used healing as a means of attracting followers or large audiences. On the contrary, he performed a number of healings out of public view. Many times he told those whom he cured to reveal the miracle to no one.—Luke 5:13, 14.

Jesus never charged money for his miracles. (Matthew 10:8) He also had an unfailing

record of success. *All* sick ones who came to him were completely cured, and the healing did not depend on the individual's faith. (Luke 6:19; John 5:5-9, 13) Why, Jesus even raised the dead! —Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56; John 11:38-44.

Though he did perform those miracles, the focus of Jesus' ministry was not on gathering converts by means of emotional sessions of miracle working. Instead, his primary work was to declare the good news of God's Kingdom. Jesus organized his followers to become disciple makers, who would teach others about the hope of attaining perfect health under God's Kingdom.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

Granted, some of Jesus' first-century followers had special gifts of healing, but these were to cease. (1 Corinthians 12:29, 30; 13:8, 13) True Christians today are identified, not by acts of healing, but by the bond of self-sacrificing love. (John 13:35) Modern-day faith healing has not produced a genuine family of Christians from all races and backgrounds who are bound together by such love.

There is, however, a group of Christians who are united by a bond of love so strong that they refuse to harm one another—or anyone else for that matter—even during the fiercest of human conflicts. Who are they? Jehovah's Witnesses. Worldwide, they are known for displaying Christlike love. Uniting people of diverse racial, national, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds is a miracle, so to speak, and is made possible only by God's holy spirit. Why not attend one of their meetings and see for yourself?

Do modern-day faith healers (shown at right) really have God's backing?





IMITATE THEIR FAITH

He “Continued Growing Up With Jehovah”

SAMUEL looked into the faces of his people. The nation had gathered at the town of Gilgal, summoned by this faithful man who had served as prophet and judge for decades. It was May or June by modern reckoning; the dry season was well along. The fields in the region were golden with wheat ready for harvest. Silence fell over the crowd. How could Samuel reach their hearts?

The people did not understand how serious their situation was. They had insisted on having a human king to rule over them. They did not grasp that they had shown gross disrespect to their God, Jehovah, and to his prophet. They were, in effect, rejecting Jehovah as their King! How could Samuel move them to repentance?

Samuel spoke. “I have grown old and gray,” he told the crowd. His whitening hair added weight to his words. He then said: “I have walked before you from my youth until this day.” (1 Samuel 11:14, 15; 12:2) Though Samuel was old, he had not forgotten his youth. His memories of those early days were still vivid. The decisions he had made back then, as a growing boy, had led him to a life of faith and devotion to his God, Jehovah.

Again and again, Samuel had to build and maintain faith, although surrounded by people who were faithless and disloyal. Today, it is just as challenging to build faith, for we live in a faithless and corrupt world. Let us see what we can learn from Samuel’s example, starting in his early boyhood.

“Ministering Before Jehovah, as a Boy”

Samuel had an unusual childhood. Shortly after he was weaned, at perhaps four years of

age or so, he began a life of service at the sacred tabernacle of Jehovah at Shiloh, over 20 miles from his home in Ramah. His parents, Elkanah and Hannah, dedicated their boy to Jehovah in a special form of service, making him a lifelong Nazirite.* Did this mean that Samuel was cast off, unloved by his parents?

Far from it! They knew that their son would be cared for at Shiloh. High Priest Eli no doubt supervised matters, for Samuel worked closely with him. There were also a number of women who served in some connection with the tabernacle, evidently in an organized way.—1 Samuel 2:22, footnote.

Furthermore, Hannah and Elkanah never forgot their beloved firstborn, whose very birth was an answer to a prayer. Hannah had asked God for a son, promising to dedicate the boy to God in a life of sacred service. When visiting each year, Hannah brought Samuel a new sleeveless coat she had made for his tabernacle service. The little boy surely cherished those visits. He no doubt thrived on his parents’ loving encouragement and

* Nazirites were under a vow that included a ban on drinking alcoholic beverages and on cutting their hair. Most undertook such vows for only a set period of time, but a few, such as Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, were lifelong Nazirites.

guidance as they taught him what a privilege it was to serve Jehovah in that unique place.

Parents today can learn a lot from Hannah and Elkanah. It is common for parents to focus all their childrearing efforts on material concerns while ignoring spiritual needs. But Samuel's parents put spiritual matters first, and that had a great bearing on the kind of man their son grew up to be.—Proverbs 22:6.

We can picture the boy growing bigger and exploring the hills around Shiloh. As he gazed down on the town and the valley that spread out below it on one side, his heart likely swelled with joy and pride when he caught sight of Jehovah's tabernacle. That tabernacle was a sacred place indeed.* Built nearly 400 years earlier under the direction of Moses himself, it was the one center for the pure worship of Jehovah in all the world.

Young Samuel grew to love the tabernacle. In the account he later wrote, we read: "Samuel was ministering before Jehovah, as a boy, having a linen ephod girded on." (1 Samuel 2:18) That simple sleeveless garment was evidently a mark that Samuel assisted the priests at the tabernacle. Although not of the priestly class, Samuel had duties that included opening the doors to the tabernacle courtyard in the morning and attending to elderly Eli. As much as he enjoyed the privileges, though, in time his innocent heart became troubled. Something was terribly wrong in Jehovah's house.

Staying Pure in the Face of Corruption

At a young age, Samuel witnessed genuine wickedness and corruption. Eli had two sons,

* The sanctuary was a rectangular structure, basically a great tent on a wooden framework. However, it was made of the finest of materials—sealskins, beautifully embroidered cloths, and costly woods plated with silver and gold. The sanctuary sat within a rectangular courtyard that included an impressive altar for sacrifices. Over time, other chambers evidently were erected at the sides of the tabernacle for the use of the priests. Samuel, it seems, slept in such a chamber.

named Hophni and Phinehas. Samuel's account reads: "The sons of Eli were good-for-nothing men; they did not acknowledge Jehovah." (1 Samuel 2:12) The two thoughts in this verse go hand in hand. Hophni and Phinehas were "good-for-nothing men"—literally "sons of worthlessness"—because they had no regard for Jehovah. They thought nothing of his righteous standards and requirements. From that one failing sprang all their other sins.

God's Law was specific about the priests' duties and the way they were to offer sacrifices at his tabernacle. For good reason! Those sacrifices represented God's provisions to forgive sins so that people could be clean in his eyes, eligible for his blessing and guidance. But Hophni and Phinehas led their fellow priests to treat the offerings with great disrespect.*

Imagine young Samuel watching, wide-eyed, as such gross abuses went on uncorrected. How many people did he see—including poor, humble, downtrodden folk—approaching that sacred tabernacle in hopes of finding some spiritual comfort and strength, only to leave disappointed, hurt, or humiliated? And how did he feel when he learned that Hophni and Phinehas also disregarded Jehovah's laws on sexual morality, as they had relations with some of the women who were serving there at the tabernacle? (1 Samuel 2:22) Perhaps he looked hopefully to Eli to do something about it.

Eli was in the best position to address the

* The account provides two examples of disrespect. For one thing, the Law specified which pieces of a sacrificial offering were to go to the priests to eat. (Deuteronomy 18:3) But at the tabernacle, the wicked priests had set up a very different practice. They would have their attendants simply jab a great fork into the cauldron where the meat was boiling, taking whatever choice morsel came out! For another thing, when people brought their sacrifices to be burned at the altar, the wicked priests would have an attendant bully the offerer, demanding the raw meat even before the fat of the sacrifice was offered to Jehovah.—Leviticus 3:3-5; 1 Samuel 2:13-17.

growing disaster. As high priest, he was responsible for what took place at the tabernacle. As a father, he had an obligation to correct his sons. After all, they were hurting themselves as well as countless others in the land. However, Eli failed on both counts, as father and as high priest. He offered his sons only a bland, weak scolding. (1 Samuel 2:23-25) But his sons needed far stronger discipline. They were committing sins worthy of death!

Matters reached such a point that Jehovah sent “a man of God,” an unnamed prophet, to Eli with a strong message of judgment. Jehovah told Eli: “You keep honoring your sons more than me.” God thus foretold that Eli’s wicked sons would die on the same day and that Eli’s family would suffer greatly, even losing its privileged position in the priestly class. Did this powerful warning bring about a change in that family? The record reveals no such change of heart.—1 Samuel 2:27–3:1.

How did all this corruption affect young Samuel? From time to time in this dark account, we find bright rays of light, good news about Samuel’s growth and progress. Recall that at 1 Samuel 2:18, we read that Samuel was faithfully “ministering before Jehovah, as a boy.” Even at that early age, Samuel centered his life on his service to God. In verse 21 of the same chapter, we read something even more heartwarming: “The boy Samuel continued growing up with Jehovah.” As he grew, his bond with his heavenly Father got stronger. Such a close personal relationship with Jehovah is the surest protection against any form of corruption.

It would have been easy for Samuel to reason that if the high priest and his sons can give in to sin, he might as well do whatever he wished. But the corruption of others, including those in positions of authority, is never an excuse to sin. Today, many

Christian youths follow Samuel’s example and keep “growing up with Jehovah”—even when some around them fail to set a good example.

How did such a course work out for Samuel? We read: “All the while the boy Samuel was growing bigger and more likable both from Jehovah’s standpoint and from that of men.” (1 Samuel 2:26) So Samuel was well-liked, at least by those whose opinions mattered. Jehovah himself cherished this boy for his faithful course. And Samuel surely knew that his God would act against all the badness going on in Shiloh, but perhaps he wondered when.

“Speak, for Your Servant Is Listening”

One night, such questions met an answer. It was nearing morning but still dark; the flickering light of the tent’s great lamp was still burning. In the stillness, Samuel heard a voice calling his name. He thought it was Eli, who was now very old and nearly blind. Samuel got up and “went running” to the old man. Can you see the boy in your mind’s eye, hurrying barefoot to see what Eli needed? It is touching to note that Samuel treated Eli with respect and kindness. In spite of all his sins, Eli was still Jehovah’s high priest.—1 Samuel 3:2-5.

Samuel woke Eli, saying: “Here I am, for you called me.” But Eli said that he had not called and sent the boy back to bed. Well, the same thing happened again and then again! Finally, Eli realized what was going on. It had become rare for Jehovah to send a vision or a prophetic message to his people, and it is not hard to see why. But Eli knew that Jehovah was speaking again—now to this boy! Eli told Samuel to go back to bed and instructed him on how to answer properly. Samuel obeyed. Soon he heard the voice calling: “Samuel, Samuel!” The boy answered: “Speak, for your servant is listening.”—1 Samuel 3:1, 5-10.

Jehovah did, at last, have a servant in Shiloh who was listening. That became Samuel's life pattern. Is it yours? We do not have to wait for a supernatural voice in the night to speak to us. Today, God's voice is always there for us in a sense. It is there in his completed Word, the Bible. The more we listen to God and respond, the more our faith will grow. So it was with Samuel.

That night in Shiloh was a milestone in Samuel's life, for then he began to know Jehovah in a special sense, becoming God's own prophet and spokesman. At first, the boy was afraid to deliver Jehovah's message to Eli, for it was a final pronouncement that the prophecy against that family was soon to come true. But Samuel mustered the courage—and Eli humbly acquiesced to the divine judgment. Before long, everything Jehovah had said was fulfilled. Israel went to war with the Philistines, and Hophni and Phinehas were killed on the same day. Eli himself died upon learning that Jehovah's sacred Ark had been captured.—1 Samuel 3:10-18; 4:1-18.

Despite his fear, Samuel faithfully relayed Jehovah's judgment message to Eli

However, Samuel's reputation as a faithful prophet only grew. "Jehovah himself proved to be with him," the account says, adding that Jehovah let none of Samuel's prophecies fail.—1 Samuel 3:19.

"Samuel Called to Jehovah"

Did that mean, though, that the Israelites followed Samuel's lead and became spiritual, faithful people? No. In time, they decided that they did not want a mere prophet to judge them. They wanted to be like other nations and have a human king rule over them. At Jehovah's direction, Samuel complied. But he had to convey to Israel the magnitude of their sin. They were rejecting, not a mere





man, but Jehovah himself! So he summoned the people to Gilgal.

Let us rejoin him in that tense moment of addressing Israel at Gilgal. There, elderly Samuel reminded Israel of his faithful record of integrity. Then, we read: “Samuel called to Jehovah.” He asked Jehovah for a thunderstorm.—1 Samuel 12:17, 18.

Samuel prayed in faith, and Jehovah answered with a thunderstorm

A thunderstorm? In the dry season? Why, such a thing was unheard of! If there was even a trace of skepticism or scoffing among the people, it did not last long. The sky suddenly darkened with clouds. The winds battered the wheat in the fields. The thunder let out its booming, deafening roars. And the rain fell. The response? “The people were greatly in fear of Jehovah and of Samuel.” At last, they saw how seriously they had sinned.—1 Samuel 12:18, 19.

Not Samuel, but his God, Jehovah, had reached their rebellious hearts. From his youth to his old age, Samuel put faith in his God. And Jehovah rewarded him. To this day, Jehovah has not changed. He still supports those who imitate the faith of Samuel.



HOW CAN YOU COMBAT Negative Feelings?

DO YOU ever struggle with negative feelings? Really, who does not? Our times are marked by economic hardship, pervasive violence, and wanton injustice. Not surprisingly, countless people are plagued by overwhelming sadness, excessive guilt, and a sense of personal worthlessness.

Such feelings can be dangerous. They may undermine our confidence, paralyze our ability to reason, and rob us of joy. The Bible says: “Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty.” (Proverbs 24:10) We need our power, our energy, in order to keep going in this troubled world. Therefore, it is essential to keep negative feelings under control.*

The Bible provides some strong defenses against negative feelings. Jehovah God, the Creator and the Sustainer of all life, does not want you to give out under the weight of despair or hopelessness. (Psalm 36:9) So let us consider three ways in which his Word can help us to combat negative feelings.

Be Aware of God’s Interest in You

Some people think that God is too occupied with other matters to give attention to their personal feelings. Is that how you feel? Actually, the Bible assures us that our Creator is concerned about our feelings. The psalmist said: “Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.” (Psalm 34:18) How comfort-

ing it is to know that the almighty Sovereign is near to us when we are in distress!

God is not cold or aloof. The Bible says that “God is love.” (1 John 4:8) He loves people and is sensitive toward those who suffer. For example, when the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt some 3,500 years ago, he said: “Unquestionably I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their outcry as a result of those who drive them to work; because *I well know the pains they suffer*. And I am proceeding to go down to deliver them.”—Exodus 3:7, 8.

God well knows our emotional makeup. After all, “it is he that has made us, and not we ourselves.” (Psalm 100:3) Thus, even when we feel that our fellow humans do not understand us, we can be sure that God understands. God’s Word states: “Not the way man sees is the way God sees, because mere man sees what appears to the eyes; but as for Jehovah, he sees what the heart is.” (1 Samuel 16:7) Even our innermost feelings are not hidden from God.

Granted, Jehovah is also aware of our mistakes and flaws. But we can be thankful that our loving Maker is forgiving. The inspired Bible writer David said: “As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:13, 14) God sees

**“I well
know the
pains they
suffer.”**

EXODUS 3:7, 8

* Those who struggle with extended or profound depression may need to consult a qualified doctor.—Matthew 9:12.

us as we may not see ourselves. He looks for the good and dismisses the bad, as long as we repent of our sins.—Psalm 139:1-3, 23, 24.

Thus, when we are plagued by feelings of worthlessness, we need to be determined to fight back. We must remember how God sees us!—1 John 3:20.

Develop a Close Friendship With God

How do we benefit if we see ourselves as God sees us? We will find it easier to take the next step in overcoming negative feelings—building a close friendship with God. Is that really possible?

As a loving Father, Jehovah God is eager to help us develop a close friendship with him. The Bible urges us: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” (James 4:8) Here is an amazing truth: Weak and sinful though we are, we can build a warm personal friendship with the Sovereign of the universe.

God has revealed himself in the Bible so that we can get to know him as a person. By reading the Bible regularly, we can learn about God’s appealing qualities.* As we meditate on such knowledge, we will feel ever closer to Jehovah. We will see him more clearly for what he truly is—a loving, compassionate Father.

Thinking deeply about what we read in the Bible does still more for us. We draw closer to our heavenly Father by taking his thoughts into our mind

and heart, allowing them to correct, console, and guide us. We especially need to do so when we are struggling with thoughts

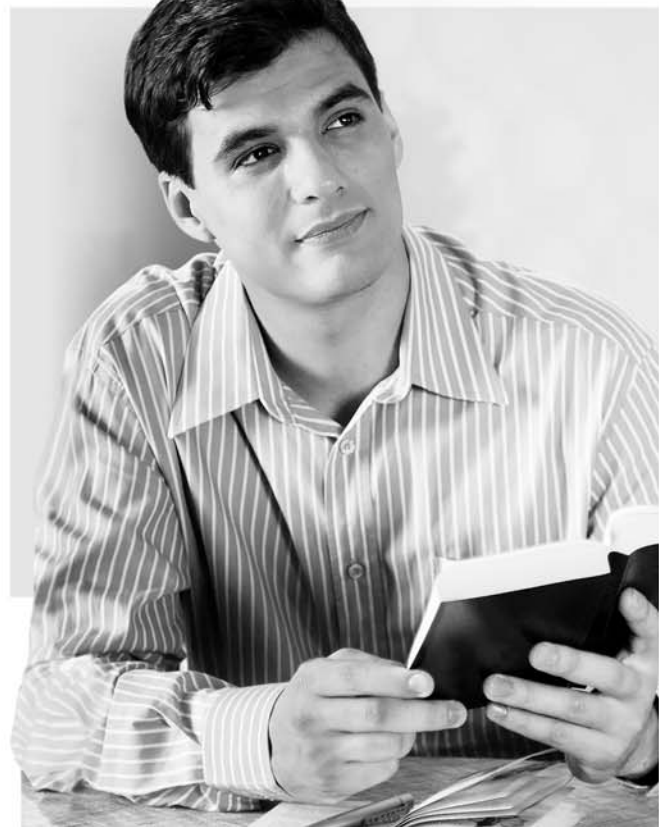
and feelings that trouble or disquiet us. The psalmist put it this way: “When I was burdened with worries, you comforted me and made me feel secure.” (Psalm 94:19, *Contemporary English Version*) God’s Word can be profoundly comforting. If we humbly accept his message of truth, we may find that our negative feelings are gradually displaced by the comfort and the peace that only God can provide. Jehovah thus consoles us as a loving parent might soothe a hurt or upset child.

Another key to becoming God’s friend involves talking to him regularly. The Bible assures us that “no matter what it is that we ask according to his will, [God] hears us.” (1 John 5:14) Whatever fears or anxieties we may have, we can pray to God and ask for his help. If we open our hearts to God, we gain peace of mind. The apostle Paul wrote: “In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and *the peace of God that ex-*

“When I was burdened with worries, you comforted me and made me feel secure.”

PSALM 94:19,
CONTEMPORARY
ENGLISH VERSION

* The August 1, 2009, issue of *The Watchtower* features a practical and useful schedule for reading the Bible.



cels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.”
—Philippians 4:6, 7.

As you adhere to a program of Bible reading, meditation, and personal prayer, you will no doubt find that you are building a close bond with your heavenly Father. That bond is a powerful weapon to wield against negative feelings. What else may help?

Focus On a Sure Hope for the Future

Even when we are under the most trying circumstances, we can keep our mind on good things. How so? God gives us a sure hope for the future. The apostle Peter summed up this wonderful hope in these words: “There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to [God’s] promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.” (2 Peter 3:13) What does that mean?

The expression “new heavens” actually

refers to a government—God’s heavenly Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ. “New earth” refers to a new human society here on earth having God’s approval. Under the rule of the “new heavens,” the new earthly society will be free of all the things that cause negative feelings. Regarding faithful humans living then, the Bible assures us that God “will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.” —Revelation 21:4.

Surely you would agree that those are delightful, encouraging thoughts. That is why the Bible speaks of the future prospects God has provided for true Christians as “the happy hope.” (Titus 2:13) If we focus our

“The peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:7

Comforting Scriptures About Jehovah God

“Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth.”—EXODUS 34:6.

“His eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him.”—2 CHRONICLES 16:9.

“Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.”—PSALM 34:18.

“You, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive.”

—PSALM 86:5.

“Jehovah is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works.”—PSALM 145:9.

“I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, the One saying to you, ‘Do not be afraid. I myself will help you.’” —ISAIAH 41:13.

“Blessed be . . . the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort.”

—2 CORINTHIANS 1:3.

“We shall assure our hearts before him as regards whatever our hearts may condemn us in, because God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.”—1 JOHN 3:19, 20.

mind on God's promises for mankind's future—and on the reasons why those promises are reliable and sure—we push aside negative thoughts.—Philippians 4:8.

The Bible compares our hope of salvation to a helmet. (1 Thessalonians 5:8) In ancient times, a soldier would not dare engage in battle without his helmet. He knew that it would cushion many a blow and cause many a missile to glance off harmlessly. As a helmet

protects the head, so hope protects the mind. Dwelling on thoughts that fill us with hope can keep us from negative, fearful, pessimistic thinking.

So it is possible to combat negative feelings. You can do it! Contemplate how God views you, draw closer to him, and focus on your hope for the future. Then you can be sure that you will see the day when negative feelings are gone for good!—Psalm 37:29.



They Are Successfully Coping With Negative Feelings

"My father is an alcoholic, and he has caused me much suffering. I have been plagued by feelings of worthlessness for as long as I can remember. But when I accepted a Bible study with one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I learned about the promise of everlasting life on earth. This hope filled my mind and heart with joy. Bible reading became a regular part of my life. I always have a Bible close by. When I am overwhelmed by negative feelings, I reach for it and read comforting scriptures. Reading about God's appealing qualities assures me how precious I am in his eyes."
—*Kátia, a 33-year-old woman.**

"I was addicted to alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, and I sniffed glue. Having lost almost everything I owned, I became a beggar. But after accepting the offer of a Bible study with Jehovah's Witnesses, I changed my life completely. I came to know God as a Person. Even though I still have to fight against feelings of guilt and worthlessness, I have learned to lean upon God's mercy and loving-kindness. I am sure that God will continue to give me the strength to overcome my negative feelings. Getting to know Bible truth is the best thing that ever happened to me."
—*Renato, a 37-year-old man.*

"Ever since I was small, I used to compare myself with my older brother. I always felt inferior to him. I still have a great sense of insecurity, doubting my abilities. But I am determined to win this battle. I have prayed incessantly to Jehovah, and he has helped me to overcome my feelings of inadequacy. It is heartwarming to know that God truly loves and cares for me!"
—*Roberta, a 45-year-old woman.*

* Some names were changed.



DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

A “Hearer of Prayer”

1 CHRONICLES 4:9, 10

DOES Jehovah God really answer the sincere prayers of devoted worshippers? The Bible account about a little-known man named Jabez shows that Jehovah is indeed the “Hearer of prayer.” (Psalm 65:2) This brief account is found in what might seem an unlikely place—in the midst of the genealogical lists that open the book of First Chronicles. Let us examine 1 Chronicles 4:9, 10.

All that we know about Jabez is found in these two verses. According to verse 9, his mother “called his name Jabez, saying: ‘I have given him birth in pain.’”^{*} Why did she choose such a name? Did she bring forth this son with more than the usual birth pangs? Was she perhaps a widow, lamenting the fact that her husband was not there to welcome their baby into the world? The Bible does not say. But this mother would someday have reason to be especially proud of this son. Jabez’ siblings may have been upright men, but “Jabez came to be more honorable than his brothers.”

Jabez was a man of prayer. He began his prayer by pleading for God’s blessing. He then made three requests that reflect a heart full of faith.

First, Jabez implored God, saying: “Enlarge my territory.” (Verse 10) This honorable man was no land-grabber, coveting what belonged to his fellow man. His earnest request may have had more to do with people than land. He may have been asking for the peaceful en-

largement of his territory so that it could hold more worshippers of the true God.*

Second, Jabez pleaded for God’s “hand” to be with him. God’s symbolic hand is his applied power, which he uses to help his worshippers. (1 Chronicles 29:12) To receive the requests of his heart, Jabez looked to the God whose hand is not short toward those who show faith in him.—Isaiah 59:1.

Third, Jabez prayed: “Preserve me from calamity, that it may not hurt me.” The expression “that it may not hurt me” may suggest that Jabez prayed, not to escape calamity, but to be kept from being grieved or overcome by the effects of evil.

Jabez’ prayer revealed his concern for true worship and his faith and trust in the Hearer of prayer. How did Jehovah respond? This brief account concludes with the words: “Accordingly God brought to pass what he had asked.”

The Hearer of prayer has not changed. He delights in the prayers of worshippers. Those who place their faith and trust in him may have this confidence: “No matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he hears us.” —1 John 5:14.

^{*} The Targums, Jewish paraphrases of the Sacred Scriptures, render Jabez’ words: “Bless me with children, and enlarge my borders with disciples.”

^{*} The name Jabez comes from a root that can mean “pain.”





TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

A Kingdom That Will Change the Whole Earth

CAN you guess what Kingdom we mean?—* It is the one Jesus taught us to pray for. He taught us to ask God: “Let your kingdom come.” (Matthew 6:9, 10) For nearly 2,000 years, followers of Jesus have prayed to God that His Kingdom come. Have you prayed about that?—

To understand what a kingdom is, you need to know what a king is. A king is a person who rules. The land he rules over is called his domain. The domain of God’s Kingdom includes *the whole earth*. When God’s Kingdom comes, everyone on earth will in time enjoy the blessings that his rule will bring to the people.

God’s Kingdom is a heavenly government. At Isaiah 9:6, the Bible talks about the Ruler of this government. Notice what it says about him: “There has been a child born to us, . . . and *the princely rule* will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called . . . Prince of Peace.”

Do you know what a prince is?— Yes, he is the son of a king. Who is the supreme heavenly King?— You are right if you said Jehovah. The Bible calls him “the Most High over all the earth.” (Psalm 83:18) In the Bible, Jesus is of—

* If you are reading with a child, the dash provides a reminder to pause and encourage the child to express himself.



ten called “the Son of God.” One reason is that Jehovah gave Jesus life. Jehovah is Jesus’ real Father.—Luke 1:34, 35; John 1:34, 49; 3:17; 11:27; 20:31; Acts 9:20.

God’s Kingdom, which Jesus taught us to pray for, is a special kind of government. It is a “princely rule” because Jehovah makes his Son, Jesus, the Ruler, or King, of the Kingdom. But did you know that others will be chosen to rule as kings with Jesus in his Father’s Kingdom?— Let’s talk about them.

Just before he died, Jesus told his faithful apostles that he was going to “the house” of his Father in heaven. “I am going my way to prepare a place for you,” he said, “that where I am you also may be.” (John 14:1-3) Do you know what the apostles and the others



chosen will do in heaven with Jesus?— They “will rule as kings with him.” The Bible even tells how many will rule as kings with Jesus. There will be 144,000. —Revelation 14:1, 3; 20:6.

What do you think it will be like on earth when the Prince of Peace and his chosen 144,000 are rulers?— It will be wonderful! There will be no war. Animals will live at peace with one another and with us. Nobody will get sick or die. The eyes of the blind will see, the ears of the deaf will hear, the lame will run and jump like deer. The earth will grow good food for everyone. And all people will love one another as Jesus taught

his disciples to do. (John 13:34, 35) Let’s turn to the verses listed here in the book of Isaiah and read about the wonderful things that will take place.—Isaiah 2:4; 11:6-11; 25:8; 33:24; 35:5, 6; 65:21-24.

Ever since Jesus taught people to pray “let your kingdom come,” millions have learned about that Kingdom. This knowledge has changed their lives. Soon, when that Kingdom comes and replaces all governments of the earth, everyone who serves Jehovah God and his chosen Ruler, Jesus Christ, will enjoy peace, health, and happiness.—John 17:3.

QUESTIONS:

- Why is God’s Kingdom also called a “princely rule”?
- Who will rule with Jesus in his Father’s Kingdom?
- What will it be like on earth under Jesus’ princely rule?



JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES enjoy discussing the Bible with their neighbors. Do you have a particular Bible question that you have wondered about? Are you curious about any of the beliefs or religious practices of Jehovah's Witnesses? If so, do not hesitate to bring up the subject the next time you come in contact with a Witness. He or she will be pleased to discuss such matters with you.

A Conversation With a Neighbor

What Is the Holy Spirit?

The following is a typical conversation that one of Jehovah's Witnesses might have with a neighbor. Let us imagine that a Witness named Scott has called at the home of a man named Brad.

What Do You Mean by "Holy Ghost"?

Brad: I have heard that Jehovah's Witnesses are not Christians. You don't believe in the holy ghost.

Scott: First, let me assure you that we are Christians. My belief in Jesus Christ has brought me to your door this morning. After all, he is the One who commands his followers to preach. But may I ask, just what do you mean by "holy ghost"?

Brad: I mean the holy spirit, the third person in the Trinity, the helper that Jesus promised to send to us. That helper is very important to me. I want to feel the presence of the holy spirit in my life.

Scott: That's how many people understand the holy spirit. Some time ago, I had an opportunity to examine what the Bible

teaches on this subject. If you have a few minutes, I would be pleased to show you what I learned.

Brad: Yes, I have a few minutes.

Scott: By the way, my name is Scott. May I ask your name?

Brad: Brad. Nice to meet you.

Scott: Nice to meet you too, Brad. Out of respect for your time, let me focus on just one aspect of this subject. You mentioned that the holy spirit is the helper that Jesus promised us. I agree with you. But is it your understanding that the holy spirit is a person and equal to God?

Brad: Yes, that is what I was taught.

Is the Holy Spirit a Person?

Scott: Let's look at a Bible passage that will help us to establish whether the holy spirit is a person or not. You may be familiar with these verses. At Acts 2:1-4, we read: "Now while the day of the festival of Pentecost was in progress they were all together at the same place, and suddenly there occurred from heaven a noise just like that of a rushing stiff

breeze, and it filled the whole house in which they were sitting. And tongues as if of fire became visible to them and were distributed about, and one sat upon each one of them, and they all became filled with holy spirit and started to speak with different tongues, just as the spirit was granting them to make utterance."

Brad: I'm familiar with that account.

Scott: Now, Brad, can a person get filled with another person?

Brad: Of course not.

Scott: Let's look a little further in the same chapter, at verse 17. The first part of the verse reads: "'In the last days,' God says, 'I shall pour out some of my spirit upon every sort of flesh.'" Let me ask you, Brad, could God pour out a portion of a coequal God?

Brad: Again, no.

Scott: John the Baptist used a different description for being filled with holy spirit. It's found at Matthew 3:11. Would you like to read this verse, please?

Brad: "I, for my part, baptize you with water because of your repentance; but the one coming after me is stronger than I am, whose sandals I am not fit to take off. That one will baptize you people with holy spirit and with fire."

Scott: Thank you. Did you notice what John the Baptist said would be done with holy spirit?

Brad: He talked about being baptized with holy spirit.

Scott: That's right. Notice that he also mentioned being baptized with fire. Obviously, fire is not a person. Do you think this verse is saying that holy spirit is a person?

Brad: No.

Scott: So according to the scriptures we have considered, the holy spirit is not a person.

Brad: I guess not.

How a "Helper"?

Scott: Earlier, though, you mentioned that expression "helper." Jesus referred to the holy spirit as a "helper" at John 14:26. Let's read that together: "The helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you." Some feel that this scripture seems to support the idea that the holy spirit is a person, someone who will help and teach.

Brad: Right, that's how I've always viewed it.

Scott: Is it possible, though, that Jesus was using a figure of speech? Now notice what Jesus said about wisdom, according to Luke 7: 35: "All the same, wisdom is proved righteous by all its children." Would you say that wisdom is a person, that it really does have children?

Brad: No. That's obviously a figure of speech.

Scott: I agree. Jesus' point is that wisdom is demonstrated by results. The Bible often uses a figure of speech called personification—that is, speaking of something inanimate as if it were alive. We often use such figures of speech in our own conversations. For example, on this bright morning, it wouldn't be unusual for someone to say, "Open the curtains, and let the sun in," would it?

Brad: I would say that myself.

Scott: And would you be referring to the sun as a person who would come into your home as a guest?

Brad: No, obviously not. It's a figure of speech.

Scott: So when Jesus spoke of the holy spirit as a helper, or teacher, could he have been using a figure of speech?

Brad: I suppose so. That would fit in with the scriptures you read about the spirit being poured out and about people being baptized with it. But if the holy spirit is not a person, what is it?

What Is the Holy Spirit?

Scott: At Acts 1:8, Jesus tells us what the holy spirit is. Would you like to read that?

Brad: “You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth.”

Scott: Notice that Jesus associates the holy spirit with power. And from the previous verses we read, where do you think that power comes from?

Brad: From God the Father.

Scott: That’s right. The holy spirit is the same force that God used to create the universe. The second verse in the Bible refers to it. Genesis 1:2 says: “God’s active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters.” The Hebrew word here translated “active force” is also translated “spirit.” It is the invisible active force by means of which God accomplishes his purpose and expresses his will. Let me give you just one more scripture to consider. It is Luke 11:13. Would you read this verse, please?

Brad: “If you, although being 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!”

Scott: If the Father in heaven controls the holy spirit, giving it to those who ask him, could the holy spirit be equal to the Father?

Brad: No. I see your point.

Scott: I don’t want to keep you, Brad. You mentioned that you have only a few minutes. But let me ask a question to summarize

our discussion. From the scriptures we considered, what would you say the holy spirit is?

Brad: It’s God’s active force.

Scott: That’s right. And according to John 14:26, when Jesus spoke of the holy spirit as a helper, or teacher, he was using a figure of speech called personification.

Brad: I never knew that.

Scott: There is something most reassuring to learn from Jesus’ words.

Brad: What’s that?

Scott: We can ask God for his holy spirit to help us in difficult circumstances. We can also ask for his spirit to help us learn the truth about him.

Brad: That is interesting. I’ll have to think about that.

Scott: Before I go, let me leave you with something else to think about. Since the holy spirit is God’s active force, then we’ll agree that God can use it to accomplish anything he chooses.

Brad: Absolutely.

Scott: Then why has he not yet used that limitless power to end all the misery and wickedness we see in the world around us? Have you ever wondered about that?*

Brad: I have, actually.

Scott: How about if I come back next week at this same time and we discuss it?

Brad: I would like that very much. See you then.

* For more information, see chapter 11 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.



SPEAKING IN TONGUES

IS IT FROM GOD?

“JUST don’t understand,” says Devon. “Each week at my church, many seem to get the holy spirit and miraculously speak in different languages. Some of them lead immoral lives. Meanwhile, I try to live in a morally upright way. Yet, as much as I pray for it, I never receive this gift of the spirit. How can that be?”

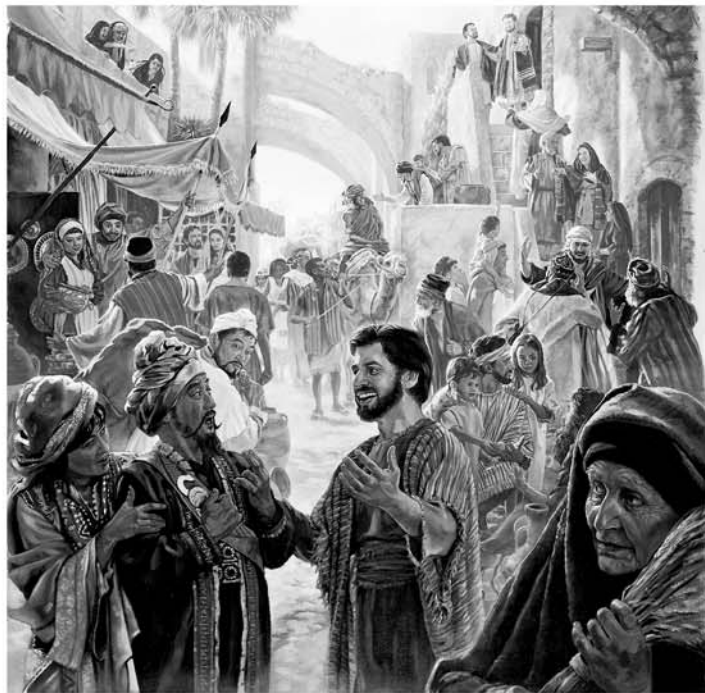
Gabriel likewise attends a church where people appear to receive holy spirit and speak in tongues. “What bothers me,” he explains, “is that during my prayers, others interrupt me with loud speech that neither I nor they understand. No one really benefits from this speech. Should not a gift of God’s spirit have some useful purpose?”

The experiences of Devon and Gabriel raise an intriguing question, Is speaking in tongues as done in some churches today really from God? To answer that question, it is helpful to examine the gift of miraculous speech among first-century Christians.

They “Started to Speak With Different Tongues”

In the Bible, we read of some men and women who were given power to speak languages that they had never learned. This first occurred on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., a few weeks after the death of Jesus Christ. On that day in Jerusalem, some 120 disciples of Jesus “became filled with holy spirit and started to speak with different tongues.” Visitors from foreign lands “were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.”—Acts 1:15; 2:1-6.

The Bible mentions other early followers of Jesus who had this remarkable ability. For ex-



ample, empowered by holy spirit, the apostle Paul could miraculously speak in numerous tongues. (Acts 19:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 14:18) But any such gift of God’s holy spirit should logically have a good purpose. So, what purpose did speaking in tongues serve in Bible times?

A Sign of God’s Backing

When writing to Christians in the city of Corinth, some of whom apparently could speak in tongues, Paul explained that “tongues are for a sign . . . to the unbelievers.” (1 Corinthians 14:22) Hence, along with other miraculous abilities, the power to speak in tongues was an indication to observers that

the newly formed Christian congregation had God's approval and backing. The miraculous gifts were like a street marker pointing out where truth-seekers should now go to find God's chosen people.

Significantly, the Bible does not mention that Jesus or any of the pre-Christian prophets miraculously spoke in tongues that they had not learned. The gift of tongues bestowed upon Jesus' disciples, then, evidently had some additional objective.

A Tool to Spread the Good News

Early in his ministry, Jesus directed his disciples to preach the good news of God's Kingdom to the Jews only. (Matthew 10:6; 15:24) As a result, the disciples rarely set foot outside of areas predominantly inhabited by Jews. But that would soon change.

Shortly after his death in 33 C.E., the resurrected Jesus commanded his followers to "make disciples of people of all the nations." He also told his followers that they would be witnesses of him "to the most distant part of the earth." (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8) Spreading the good news to that extent would require the use of many tongues other than Hebrew.

However, many of those early disciples were "unlettered and ordinary." (Acts 4:13) How, then, would they be able to preach in distant lands where languages were spoken that they may never have heard of, let alone learned to speak? Holy spirit empowered some of those zealous preachers with the miraculous ability to preach fluently in languages they had never before learned to speak.

Thus, the gift of tongues served two vital purposes. First, it provided a sign as evidence of God's backing. Second, it was an effective tool to help the first-century Christians fulfill their commission to preach to people of many languages. Does the speaking in

tongues done in many churches today accomplish these purposes?

Speaking in Tongues Today —A Sign of God's Backing?

Where would you post a sign to benefit as many individuals as possible in your community? Inside a small building? Of course not! The account of the day of Pentecost tells us that a "multitude" of passersby observed the sign provided by the disciples' miraculous speaking in tongues. Why, as a result, "about three thousand souls were added" to the Christian congregation on that day! (Acts 2:5, 6, 41) If people today claim to speak in tongues but do so within the confines of a church building, how can the practice serve as a public sign to multitudes of unbelievers?

God's Word mentions fornication and other "works of the flesh" as being opposed to the operation of holy spirit, adding that "those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom." (Galatians 5:17-21) If you observe people of questionable morals speaking in tongues, you might rightly wonder, 'Would it not be inconsistent—even misleading—for God's holy spirit to be bestowed on individuals who persistently engage in conduct that God's own Word condemns?' That would be like installing a street sign that directs traffic the wrong way.

Speaking in Tongues Today —A Tool to Spread the Good News?

What about the other purpose of the gift of tongues in the first century? Does the speaking in tongues practiced in churches serve as a tool for preaching the good news to people of different languages? Recall that observers who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E. were from many lands, and they clearly understood the languages miraculously spoken by the disciples. In contrast, those who speak in tongues today usually ut-

ter speech that is unintelligible to any listener.

Clearly, modern-day speaking in tongues is very different from the gift of holy spirit given to Jesus' early followers. In fact, there is no reliable record of anyone receiving that same miraculous power since the death of the apostles. This is not surprising to Bible readers. Regarding the miraculous gifts, including that of speaking in tongues, the inspired apostle Paul prophesied: "They will cease." (1 Corinthians 13:8) How, then, can one discern who has the holy spirit today?

Who Give Evidence of Having Holy Spirit?

Jesus well knew that the gift of tongues would cease relatively soon after the formation of the Christian congregation. Shortly before he died, Jesus mentioned a timeless sign, or mark, that would identify his true followers. "By this all will know that you are my disciples," he said, "if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) In fact, in the same verse where God's Word foretold that the miraculous gifts would eventually cease, it says: "Love never fails."—1 Corinthians 13:8.

Love is listed as the first of nine aspects of "the fruitage," or product, of God's holy spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) So those who truly have God's spirit—and hence God's backing—would show genuine love for one another. In addition, the third aspect of the spirit's fruitage is peace. Thus, those people who today have holy spirit would be committed to peace, earnestly seeking to rise above bigotry, racism, and violence.

Also, recall Jesus' prophecy recorded at Acts 1:8. He foretold that his disciples would receive power to be witnesses of him "to the most distant part of the earth." Jesus also indicated that this work would continue "unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20,



King James Version) Hence, this international preaching work would continue to be an identifying mark of those who are truly empowered by holy spirit.

What do you think? With what group of people do you find evidence of holy spirit today? Who are manifesting the spirit's fruitage, particularly love and peace, to the extent that they suffer at the hands of governments because of their refusal to bear arms worldwide? (Isaiah 2:4) Who are endeavoring to avoid the works of the flesh, such as fornication, even removing unrepentant practitioners of such conduct from their midst? (1 Corinthians 5:11-13) Who are preaching in all the earth the good news that God's Kingdom is the only hope for humanity?—Matthew 24:14.

The publishers of this journal do not hesitate to say that Jehovah's Witnesses fit the Bible's description of the people having holy spirit. Why not become better acquainted with them and decide for yourself whether they truly have God's backing?



Why do only humans pray? SEE PAGE 3.



Does God really hear and answer our prayers? SEE PAGE 11.



How do the miraculous healings performed by Jesus compare with the methods of faith healers today? SEE PAGE 13.



How can the Bible help us to combat negative feelings?
SEE PAGE 19.



Is the holy spirit a person? SEE PAGE 26.

Would you welcome a visit?