

NOVEMBER 1, 2010

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



FIVE SECRETS OF
Contentment

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.

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

FROM OUR COVER

- 3 Is It Possible to Be Content?
- 4 SECRET 1. Love People, Not Money and Possessions
- 5 SECRET 2. Resist the Urge to Compare Yourself With Others
- 6 SECRET 3. Maintain an Appreciative Attitude
- 7 SECRET 4. Choose Your Friends Wisely
- 8 SECRET 5. Satisfy Your Spiritual Need



REGULAR FEATURES

- 12 Keys to Family Happiness
—Talk to Your Children About Sex
- 15 Did You Know?
- ◀ 16 What We Learn From Jesus
—How Spirit Creatures Affect Us
- 18 The Bible Changes Lives
- 22 For Young People—A Leper Is Healed!
- 30 Draw Close to God
—“He Will Let Himself Be Found by You”
- 31 Our Readers Ask . . .

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- ◀ 9 Comfort the Bereaved, as Jesus Did
- 24 The Life and Times of First-Century Christians
—Traveling to the Most Distant Part of the Earth
- 27 Does Bible Prophecy Point to the
Modern State of Israel?



Is It Possible to Be Content?

“Content[ment] makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor.”

—Benjamin Franklin.

TRUE to that proverb, many have learned that contentment cannot be bought like merchandise. No wonder that contentment—an inward feeling of satisfaction—seems elusive in a world that fosters a desire for more possessions, greater achievements, or the life enjoyed by others! Have any of the following affected you?

- Advertisers bombard you with the message that contentment is only one more purchase away.
- Competition at work or at school encourages you to measure your worth against what others are able to do.
- People lack appreciation for what you do for them.
- Friends make you envious of what they have.
- Your fundamental questions about life go unanswered.

Faced with such challenges, is it really possible to be content? The apostle Paul referred to “the secret of being content.” At times, he had lived with plenty and at other times, with little. He was admired by his friends but mocked by others. Yet, he said that he had “*learned* to be content whatever the circumstances.”—Italics ours; Philippians 4:11, 12, *New International Version*.

Contentment is a secret to those who have never taken steps to attain it, but as Paul stated, it can be learned. We now invite you to consider five secrets of contentment found in God’s Word, the Bible.

Love People, Not Money and Possessions

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH? “The love of money is a root of all sorts of in-jurious things.”—1 Timothy 6:10.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE? Advertisers pressure us to be discontented with what we have. They want us to slave to gain money so that we can spend it on newer, better, bigger items. Money is seductive, and we can easily fall in love with it. However, the Bible warns that a person who loves riches will never be content. “A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver, neither any lover of wealth with income,” wrote King Solomon.—Ecclesiastes 5:10.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Imitate Jesus, and learn to love people more than things. Jesus was willing to give up all he had—even his life—because of love for people. (John 15:13) He said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) If we make it a practice to give to others of our time and resources, people will respond in kind. “Practice giving,” Jesus said, “and people will give to you.” (Luke 6:38) Those who pursue mon-

ey and possessions cause themselves pain and suffering. (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) On the other hand, true contentment comes from loving and being loved.

Why not evaluate whether you can simplify your lifestyle? Can you decrease the number of possessions you have or are seeking to acquire? If you do, you may find that you have extra time and energy for the more important things in life—helping people and serving God, who gave you all that you have.—Matthew 6:24; Acts 17:28.

*“Practice giving,
and people will
give to you”*



THE WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah's Witnesses, using one of the addresses below. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address.

America, United States of: 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. **Australia:** PO Box 280,

Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Bahamas:** PO Box N-1247, Nassau, NP. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** Am Steinfels, 65618 Sellers. **Guam:** 143 Jehovah St, Barrigada, GU 96913. **Guyana:** 352-360 Tyrell St, Republic Park Phase 2 EBD. **Hawaii:** 2055 Kamehameha IV Road, Honolulu, HI 96819-2619. **Jamaica:** PO Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **Japan:** 4-7-1 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa-Pref, 243-0496. **Puerto Rico:** PO Box 3980, Guaynabo, PR 00970. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago:** Lower Rapesey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. Vol. 131, No. 21

© 2010 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Semimonthly

ENGLISH

SECRET 2

Resist the Urge to Compare Yourself With Others



*Jehovah
measures our
worth by what
is in our heart*

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH? “Do your own work well, and then you will have something to be proud of. But don’t compare yourself with others.” —Galatians 6:4, *Contemporary English Version*.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE? We may like to compare ourselves with others—sometimes with those who have less than we have, often with those who are stronger, wealthier, or more talented than we are. Either way, the effect is negative. We mistakenly assume that a person’s worth is determined by what he has or what he is able to do. We may also stir up feelings of envy and a spirit of competition.—Ecclesiastes 4:4.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Try to see yourself as God sees you. Allow his view to influence your sense of self-worth. “Mere man sees what appears to the eyes; but as for Jehovah,* he sees what the heart is.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

* God’s name as found in the Bible.

Jehovah gauges your worth, not by comparing you with some other human, but by reading your heart, examining your thoughts, feelings, and intentions. (Hebrews 4:12, 13) Jehovah understands your limitations and urges you to respect them too. If you measure your own worth by comparing yourself with others, you will end up either haughty or chronically discontented. So modestly accept that you will not excel in every endeavor.—Proverbs 11:2.

What specifically must you do to have value in God’s eyes? He inspired the prophet Micah to write: “He has told you, O earthling man, what is good. And what is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?” (Micah 6:8) If you follow that advice, God will care for you. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) What greater reason for contentment could there be?

NOW PUBLISHED IN 182 LANGUAGES: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Armenian (West), Aymara, Azerbaijani, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Baoulé, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional)* (audio Mandarin only), Chitonga, Chuukese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,* Danish,* Dutch,*⁺ Efik, English,*⁺ (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,* French,*⁺ Ga, Georgian, German,*⁺ Greek, Greenlandic, Guarani, Gujarati, Gun, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,*⁺ Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Isoko, Italian,*⁺ Japanese,*⁺ Kanna-da, Kaonde, Kazakh, Kikongo, Kiluba, Kinyarwanda,

Kirghiz, Kiribati, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean,*⁺ Kwangali, Kwanyama, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Marshallese, Mauritian Creole, Maya, Mizo, Moore, Myanmar, Ndebele, Ndonga, Nepali, Niuean, Norwegian,*⁺ Nyane-ka, Oromo, Ossetian, Otetela, Palauan, Pangasinan, Papiamentu (Curaçao), Persian, Polish,*⁺ Ponapean, Portuguese,*⁺ Punjabi, Quechua (Ancash), Quechua (Ayacucho), Quechua (Bolivia), Quechua (Cuzco), Quichua, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,*⁺ Samoan, Sango, Sepedi, Serbian, Serbian (Roman), Sesotho, Seychelles Creole, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,*⁺ Sranan-

tongo, Swahili, Swati, Swedish,* Tagalog, Tahitian, Tamil, Tatar, Telugu, Tetum, Thai, Tigrinya, Tiv, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Totonac, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Tumbuka, Turkish, Tuvaluan, Twi, Tzotzil, Ukrainian, Umbundu, Urdu, Uruund, Uzbek, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Waray-Waray, Wolaita, Xhosa, Yapepe, Yoruba, Zande, Zapotec (Isthmus), Zulu

⁺ CD also available.

• MP3 CD-ROM also available.

• Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

SECRET 3

Maintain an Appreciative Attitude

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH? “In connection with everything give thanks.”—1 Thessalonians 5:18.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE? We are surrounded by people who are haughty and unthankful, attitudes that can rub off on us. (2 Timothy 3:1, 2) In addition, we may feel compelled to cram more and more activities into our already hectic lives. We could become so burdened by problems or engrossed in pursuing our own interests that we do not have time to appreciate what we already have or to express appreciation for what others do for us.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Make time to meditate on the good things you now enjoy. Granted, you may feel overwhelmed by problems. But consider the example of King David. He at times felt crushed, his heart numbed by trials. Even so, he prayed to God: “I have meditated on all your activity; I willingly kept myself concerned

Do you express appreciation for what others do for you?

with the work of your own hands.” (Psalm 143:3-5) Despite his trials, David maintained an appreciative attitude and remained content.

Think about what others have done to help you, and express appreciation for their efforts. Jesus set an outstanding example in this regard. For instance, when his friend Mary poured expensive oil on his head and feet, some asked: “Why has this waste of the perfumed oil taken place?”* Those critics felt that the oil should have been sold and the money given to the poor. Jesus replied: “Let her alone. Why do you try to make trouble for her?” Then he added: “She did what she could.” (Mark 14:3-8; John 12:3) Rather than focus on what Mary did *not* do, Jesus expressed appreciation for what she *did* do.

Some appreciate the family, friends, or other blessings they have only *after* those are lost. You can avoid that sad outcome by reflecting on the good things you *now* enjoy! Why not make a mental or a written list of the things for which you are grateful?

Since “every good gift” originally comes from God, we do well to express our thankfulness to him in prayer. (James 1:17) Regularly doing so can help us maintain an appreciative spirit and cultivate contentment. —Philippians 4:6, 7.

* In the first century, pouring oil on a guest’s head was a gesture of hospitality; pouring oil on the feet was an act of humility.



SECRET 4

Choose Your Friends Wisely

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH? “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise.”—Proverbs 13:20.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE? Our friends will either add to our contentment or undermine it. Their attitudes and conversations are bound to affect our outlook on life.—1 Corinthians 15:33.

Consider, for example, the Bible account of 12 men who returned from an expedition into Canaan. The majority of them “kept on bringing forth to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out.” Even so, two of the men spoke positively about Canaan, calling it “a very, very good land.” But the negative attitude of the ten spies spread among the people. “All the assembly raised their voice,” the account states, “and all the sons of Israel began to murmur.”—Numbers 13:30–14:9.

Likewise today, many people “are murmurers, complainers about their lot in life.” (Jude 16) It is difficult to remain content in the company of friends who are never satisfied.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Analyze the conversations you have with your friends. Do your friends often boast about the things they own, or do they constantly complain about what they do not have? And what kind of friend are you to them? Do you strive to make your friends envy you, or do you encourage them to be content with what they have?



Do your friends add to your contentment or undermine it?

Consider the example set by David, who was to become king, and Jonathan, the son of King Saul. David had been living as a fugitive in the wilderness. King Saul felt threatened by David and wanted him dead. Although Jonathan would normally have been next in line for the kingship, he had become one of David’s close friends. Jonathan recognized that God had appointed David to be the next king and was content to support his friend.—1 Samuel 19:1, 2; 20:30–33; 23:14–18.

You need friends like that, ones who strive to be content and who have your best interests at heart. (Proverbs 17:17) Of course, to attract friends of that sort, you need to display those same qualities yourself.—Philippians 2:3, 4.

Satisfy Your Spiritual Need

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH? “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.”—Matthew 5:3.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE? There are thousands of different religions, many of which teach conflicting ways to satisfy your spiritual need. How can you know which one teaches the truth and truly pleases God? Some prominent authors assert that belief in God and devotion to him is illogical, even harmful. *Maclean’s* magazine summarizes the views of one prominent atheist this way: “This Christian concept, that there is something beyond science and beyond our senses . . . devalues the only life we have and makes us too prone to violence.”

*Prove to
yourself what
is acceptable
to God*



WHAT CAN YOU DO? Examine the evidence that God exists. (Romans 1: 20; Hebrews 3:4) Do not let anyone discourage you from looking for answers to important questions, such as the following: Why are we here? Is there life after death? Why is there so much suffering? What does God require of me? Finding satisfying answers to those questions is fundamental to your gaining lasting contentment.

However, do not blindly accept what others tell you. God’s Word encourages you to use your “power of reason” to prove to yourself what is acceptable to him. (Romans 12:1, 2) You will be rewarded for your efforts. If you make time to study the Bible and apply its practical counsel, you will avoid problems, lessen anxiety, and increase your enjoyment of life. That is no idle promise. Millions of people from all sorts of backgrounds have benefited by learning the truth about God and his purposes. Read, for example, the real-life accounts on pages 18 to 21 of this magazine.

As you benefit from applying the Bible’s wise counsel, your devotion to God will deepen. Why not accept the invitation to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses? If you do, you will likely find yourself agreeing with the apostle Paul, who wrote: “It is a means of great gain, this godly devotion along with contentment.” —1 Timothy 6:6, footnote.



Comfort the Bereaved, as Jesus Did

LAZARUS, a resident of Bethany, became seriously ill. His sisters, Martha and Mary, dispatched messengers to their close friend Jesus. But the illness took Lazarus' life. As he lay in a tomb, friends and neighbors visited Martha and Mary "in order to console them." (John 11:19) At last, Jesus arrived in Bethany and went to see his dear friends. By considering what he said and did, we can learn something about how to comfort the bereaved.

Your Presence Shows You Care

To reach Bethany, Jesus had to travel for about two days, crossing the Jordan River and climbing the steep winding road from Jericho. Martha quickly went to greet Jesus at the outskirts of the village. Later, when Mary heard that Jesus was present, she too hastened to see him. (John 10:40-42; 11:6, 17-20, 28, 29) Jesus' presence was surely a source of comfort to the grief-stricken sisters.



Today, our presence can likewise console those who grieve. Scott and Lydia, who lost their six-year-old son, Theo, in an accident, recall: “We needed family and friends for support. They came in the middle of the night, straight to the hospital.” What did these friends say? “At that moment, we did not need words. Their presence said everything—they cared.”

The Bible says that when Jesus saw those weeping over the death of Lazarus, he “became troubled” and “gave way to tears.” (John 11:33-35, 38) Jesus did not consider it unmanly to shed tears in front of others. He felt their pain and shared their loss. The lesson for us? When visiting the bereaved, we need not feel embarrassed to weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:15) On the other hand, do not feel obliged to compel the bereaved person to shed tears. Some may prefer to do so in privacy.

Listen Compassionately

Jesus may have had in mind some words of encouragement for Martha and Mary, but he apparently let them speak first. (John 11:20, 21, 32) When he did speak with Martha, he asked a question, and then he listened.—John 11:25-27.

Being a good listener shows genuine concern. To console the bereaved, we need to listen well. We can prove ourselves good listeners by asking questions that invite the bereaved to express themselves further. Be careful, however, not to force a conversation if they just want to be quiet. They may simply be exhausted and in need of rest.

Grieving ones may feel numb and at times repeat things. Some give vent to their feelings. Mary and Martha both said to Jesus: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (John 11:21, 32) What did Jesus do? He listened patiently and compassionately. He refrained from trying to

tell them how to feel. He no doubt understood that intense and painful feelings may well up.

If you are unsure about what to say when visiting the bereaved, you might start the conversation by asking, “Would you like to talk about it?” Then give your full attention to the answer. Be absorbed in what you are hearing. Look directly at the person and try to understand his or her feelings.

Perceiving the feelings of the bereaved is a challenge. “Our needs changed,” explains Lydia. “Sometimes we couldn’t help but cry uncontrollably in the presence of visitors. We just wanted others to be positive. Our friends did their best to understand our feelings.”

Jesus did this perfectly. He knew that each one has “his own plague and his own pain.” (2 Chronicles 6:29) Jesus adapted his response to the two sisters’ greetings. Martha continued talking, so Jesus conversed with her. Because Mary was weeping, Jesus did not talk for long. (John 11:20-28, 32-35) What can we learn from his example? It may be best to let the bereaved steer the conversa-



tion. Your willingness to listen as they express their personal grief may bring them much comfort.

Words That Heal

When Mary and Martha said to Jesus: “If you had been here,” he did not apportion blame or take issue with what they said. His reassuring reply to Martha was: “Your brother will rise.” (John 11:23) With those few words, Jesus helped her to look ahead and kindly reminded her that there was hope.

When speaking to bereaved ones, remember that sincere, positive words can mean so much, however few they may be. Words of consolation can be spoken or written. Since letters and cards can be reread, they may provide long-range comfort. Nine months after her husband, Bob, died, Kath read again all the cards she had received. “I found that they helped me even more at that time,” she said. “That is when the comfort came.”

What might you include in a brief note of condolence? You could write about the deceased—an experience you shared in common or a treasured quality of the individual. Kath says: “Warm expressions about Bob and his character made me want to smile and cry at the same time. Humorous stories about him made me chuckle and recall our happy life together. Many cards that I now cherish included verses from the Bible.”

Provide Practical Help

To help Lazarus’ family, Jesus did what we cannot do. He brought Lazarus back to life. (John 11:43, 44) But we can do practical things that are within our power, such as preparing a meal, offering accommodations to visitors, doing the laundry, minding young children, running errands, or providing transportation. Simple acts of genuine love will no doubt be deeply appreciated by the bereaved.



Understandably, grieving ones may need some time to be alone. Still, you can take the appropriate initiative to keep in contact with them. “There is no time limit for grief, no date for feeling better,” says one bereaved mother. Some try to remember the bereaved on important anniversaries, such as the wedding anniversary or the date of the death. By making yourself available at such times, you may become a valued companion during difficult moments.—Proverbs 17:17.

The comfort Jesus gave included the hope he shared with his disciples: “Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying there to awaken him from sleep.” (John 11:11) Jesus assured his followers that a resurrection of the dead will take place. He asked Martha: “Do you believe this?” She replied: “Yes, Lord.”—John 11:24-27.

Do you believe that Jesus will resurrect the dead? If so, share this precious hope with the bereaved. Provide them with practical support. Your words and actions will then bring them a measure of comfort.—1 John 3:18.



KEYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

Talk to Your Children About Sex

Alicia,* a teenager, says: “Sometimes I’m just curious about something regarding sex, but I feel that if I ask my parents questions, they’ll think I’m up to something bad.”

Inez, Alicia’s mother, says: “I would love to sit down and talk with my daughter about sex, but she’s so busy with her own life. It’s hard to find a time when she’s free.”

TODAY, sex is everywhere—on TV, in movies, and plastered all over advertising. It seems that the only place the subject is still considered taboo is in conversation between parents and children. “I wish parents knew how nerve-racking and embarrassing it is to talk to them about sex,” says a teen in Canada named Michael. “It’s easier to talk to a friend.”

Often, parents are just as reluctant as their children to broach the subject. In her book *Beyond the Big Talk*, health educator Debra W. Haffner says: “Many parents have told me that they bought their child a book on sexuality or puberty, left it in the preteen’s room, and never discussed it again.” Haffner says that the message to children is clear: “We want you to know about your body and about sex; we just don’t want to talk to you about it.”

If you are a parent, you need to take a different stance. Indeed, it is crucial that you personally talk to your children about sex. Consider three reasons:

1. The sexual landscape has changed. “There is no longer the quick definition

* Names in this article have been changed.



of sex—a husband and wife having intercourse,” says 20-year-old James. “Now, there is oral sex, anal sex, cybersex—even ‘sexting’ over the phone.”

2. Your children will likely be confronted with misinformation at an early age. “They will hear about sex as soon as they start school,” says a mother named Sheila, “and they will *not* get the viewpoint that you want them to have.”

3. Your children have questions about sex but are not likely to initiate a discussion with you. “Frankly, I have no idea how to start a conversation with my parents about sex,” says 15-year-old Ana from Brazil.

Really, talking to your children about sex is part of your God-given responsibility as a parent. (Ephesians 6:4) True, it may be awkward, both for you and for them. On the positive side, though, many youths agree with 14-year-old Danielle, who says, “We want to learn about sex from our parents—not from some teacher or TV program.” How, then, can you talk to your children about this important yet admittedly awkward topic?*

According to Their Age

Unless they live in total isolation, children begin hearing about sex at an early age. Even more disturbing is the fact that in these “last days,” wicked men have advanced “from bad to worse.” (2 Timothy 3:1, 13) Sadly, many children are exploited by adults for perverted sexual purposes.

It is therefore important for you to start educating your children while they are still quite young. “If you wait till they’re nearing their teens,” says a mother in Germany named Renate, “they may not want to speak openly because of the inhibitions that come with puberty.” The key is to give children information that is appropriate to their age.

For preschoolers: Focus on teaching the proper names of the sex organs, and emphasize that no one should touch these organs. “I started teaching my son when he was three years old,” says a mother in Mexico named Julia. “Just knowing that teachers, babysitters, or older children could hurt him concerned me very much. He needed to know how to protect himself from strangers.”

TRY THIS: Train your child to respond firmly if anyone attempts to play with his or her

* This article will address the need to talk to your children about sex. A future article in this series will discuss how to impart moral values in such discussions.

sex organs. For example, you might teach your child to say: “*Stop that! I’m going to tell on you!*” Assure your child that telling is always appropriate—even if the person promises gifts or makes threats.*

For primary-school children: Use these years as an opportunity to add to your child’s knowledge gradually. “Test the waters before having a talk,” recommends a father named Peter. “See what they already know and whether they want to know more. Don’t force the discussion. It will likely come naturally if you regularly spend time with your children.”

TRY THIS: Have frequent, short discussions instead of one ‘big talk.’ (Deuteronomy 6:6-9) This way you will not overwhelm your children. Furthermore, as they grow up, they will have the information they need in accord with their maturity level.

For adolescents: Now is the time to make sure that your child has sufficient knowledge of the physical, emotional, and moral aspects of sex. “Boys and girls at my school are already hooking up,” says 15-year-old Ana, quoted earlier. “I think that as a Christian, I need sufficient knowledge about the subject. As embarrassing as sex may be to discuss, it’s something I must know about.”#

A caution: Teens may hold back from asking questions because they fear that their parents will suspect them of improper conduct. That is what one father named Steven found. “Our son became reluctant to discuss sex,” he says. “But later we found out that he felt we were suspicious of his behavior. We

* Adapted from page 171 of *Learn From the Great Teacher*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Use chapters 1-5, 28, 29, and 33 of *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 2, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses, to have discussions with your adolescent about sex.

made it clear that we were not discussing these subjects because we suspected him of anything; we only wanted to make sure that he was equipped to handle the bad influences around him.”

TRY THIS: Instead of confronting your adolescent with direct questions about a particular matter regarding sex, ask how his or her classmates view the matter. For example, you might say: “Many people today feel that oral sex isn’t really sex. Is that how your schoolmates feel?” Such indirect questions are more likely to get your adolescent to open up and express his or her own views.

Overcoming Awkwardness

Granted, talking to your children about sex may be one of the most awkward parenting tasks you will face. But it is well worth your effort. “Over time,” says a mother named Diane, “the awkwardness fades, and talking to your child about sex can actually become a bonding opportunity.” Steven, quoted earlier, agrees. “It becomes easier to discuss awkward topics like sex if you establish a routine of being open about *whatever* subjects present themselves in the family,” he says, adding: “The awkwardness never completely goes away, but open communication is the lifeblood of a healthy Christian family.”

ASK YOURSELF . . .

Read the following comments received from youths around the world, and then ask yourself the accompanying questions.



- “My parents tell me to read articles dealing with sex and then approach them if I have any questions. But I wish they would talk to me more about it.”—Ana, Brazil.

Why, do you think, is it important to do more than simply give your child material to read?

- “I know so many twisted things about sex—things that I think my father has no clue about. He would be horrified if I asked him about it.”—Ken, Canada.

What fears might your child have about talking

to you regarding his or her concerns?

- “When I finally got the courage to ask my parents a question about sex, they replied as if accusing me, asking, ‘Why would you ask about that? Has something happened?’”—Masami, Japan.

When your child asks you a question about sex, how can your reaction either open the door for future discussions or close it?

- “It would help if my parents would reassure me that when they were my age, they were asking the same

questions and that it’s normal for me to ask questions too.”—Lisette, France.

How can you put your child at ease, so that he or she will feel more comfortable talking to you about sex?

- “My mother would ask me questions about sex—but in a pleasant tone of voice. I feel that this is important, so that a child does not feel as if he’s being judged.”—Gerald, France.

What tone of voice do you use when talking to your child about sex? Is an adjustment needed?



DID YOU KNOW?

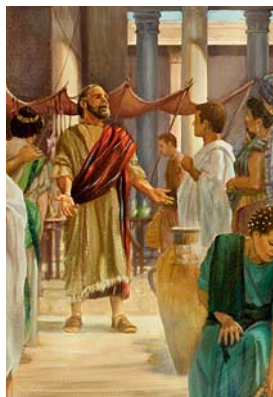
To what was the apostle Paul referring when he said that he bore on his body “the brand marks of a slave of Jesus”? —Galatians 6:17.

■ Paul’s words could have suggested a number of possible meanings in the minds of his first-century audience. For instance, a red-hot iron was used in ancient times to identify prisoners of war, robbers of temples, and fugitive slaves. When used on humans in this way, the brand mark was considered dishonorable.

However, brand marks were not always viewed negatively. Many ancient peoples used them to denote membership of a specific tribe or of a particular religion. According to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*,

for example, “the Syrians consecrated themselves to the gods Hadad and Atargatis by signs branded on the wrist or neck . . . An ivy leaf was branded on the devotee of Dionysus.”

Many modern-day commentators assume that Paul was referring to scars received in different episodes of physical abuse during his Christian missionary activity. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27) Perhaps, though, Paul meant that his way of life—not any literal marks—identified him as a Christian.



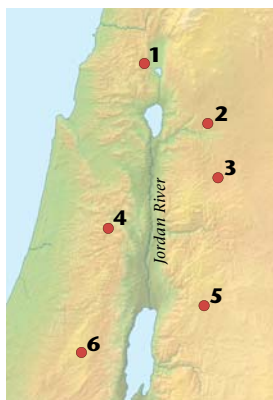
Did the cities of refuge in ancient Israel become sanctuaries for criminals?

■ In the ancient pagan world, many temples served as asylums for fugitives or criminals. In medieval Christendom, abbeys and churches served the same function. The rules governing ancient Israel’s cities of refuge, however, ensured that they did not become sanctuaries for criminals.

The Mosaic Law stated that cities of refuge protected only the unintentional manslayer. (Deuteronomy 19:4, 5) He could flee to the nearest city of refuge, out of reach of the victim’s nearest male relative, who could otherwise avenge the shed blood. After stating his case to the city’s older men, the fugitive was taken to stand trial in the city having jurisdiction over the location

where the death occurred. There he had opportunity to prove his innocence. The elders reviewed the relationship between the fugitive and the victim, noting if prior hatred existed.—Numbers 35:20-24; Deuteronomy 19:6, 7; Joshua 20:4, 5.

If found innocent, the fugitive returned to the city of refuge and had to remain in its immediate vicinity. These cities were not prisons. The refugee worked and served as a useful member of society. Upon the death of the high priest, all refugees could leave the cities of refuge in safety.—Numbers 35:6, 25-28.



CITIES OF REFUGE

- 1** KEDESH
- 2** GOLAN
- 3** RAMOTH-GILEAD
- 4** SHECHEM
- 5** BEZER
- 6** HEBRON



WHAT WE LEARN FROM JESUS

How Spirit Creatures Affect Us

Jesus lived in the spirit realm with his Father “before the world was.” (John 17:5) Therefore, he is well-qualified to answer the following questions.

Are angels interested in us?

■ From Jesus we learn that angels are deeply interested in people. He said: “Joy arises among the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” —Luke 15:10.

Jesus revealed that angels are given the responsibility to look out for the spiritual welfare of God’s servants. Thus, when Jesus warned his disciples against stumbling others, he said: “See to it that you men do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:10) By this, Jesus did not necessarily mean that each of his followers has a guardian angel assigned to him. But Jesus did show that angels who work closely with God have an active interest in members of the Christian congregation.

Angels play a role in gathering sincere people into the Christian congregation



How can the Devil harm us?

■ Jesus warned his followers that Satan tries to stop people from learning the truth about God. “Where anyone hears the word of the kingdom but does not get the sense of it,” Jesus said, “the wicked one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.”—Matthew 13:19.

Jesus exposed one way Satan deceives people when he presented an illustration about a man who sowed wheat seed in his field. The man represented Jesus, and the wheat represented true Christians who will rule with Jesus in heaven. However, Jesus said that an enemy came and “oversowed weeds in among the wheat.” The weeds denote false Christians. “The enemy that sowed them is the Devil.” (Matthew 13:25, 39) Just as weeds can look like sprouts of wheat, those who claim to be Christians may appear to be true worshippers. Religions that teach false doctrines deceive people into disobeying God. Satan uses false religion to rob people of friendship with Jehovah.



How can we stop Satan from harming us?

■ Jesus called Satan “the ruler of the world.” (John 14:30) Jesus revealed in a prayer to God how we can gain protection from Satan. Concerning his disciples, Je-

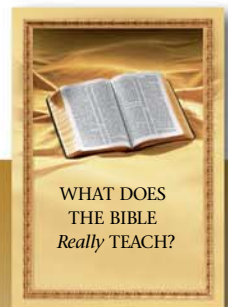
sus prayed to his heavenly Father: “Watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. Sanctify them by means of the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:15-17) Knowledge of God’s Word can protect us from being influenced by the world of mankind that Satan rules.



How do angels affect us today?

■ “In the conclusion of the system of things,” said Jesus, “the angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous.” (Matthew 13:49) We are now living in “the conclusion of the system of things,” and millions are responding to the good news of God’s Kingdom.—Matthew 24:3, 14.

But not all who begin to study God’s Word gain his approval. Angels direct the work of Jehovah’s servants, and people who genuinely love God are separated from those who do not want to apply what they learn. Describing those who do gain God’s approval, Jesus said: “These are the ones that, after hearing the word with a fine and good heart, retain it and bear fruit with endurance.”—Luke 8:15.



For more information,
see chapter 10 of
this book, published by
Jehovah’s Witnesses.

THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

WHAT moved a former rebel soldier and thief to change his lifestyle? Why did a martial arts champion change her goals in life? How was one father's faith in his son rewarded? Read these accounts to find the answers.



"Despite my dark past, I am now happy." —GARRY P. AMBROCIO

AGE: 47

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: PHILIPPINES

HISTORY: REBEL SOLDIER



MY PAST: I grew up in the small town of Vintar. The wide valley plain where we lived was surrounded by green mountains, clean rivers, and fresh air. Despite the peaceful setting, life was difficult. People stole our livestock and broke into our home.

When I was in my teens, I drank a lot with my friends, smoked cigarettes, and stole in order to finance my vices. I even stole jewelry from my own grandmother. The military suspected me of belonging to the rebel group called the New People's Army (NPA) and often beat me up badly. As a result, I decided to join the rebel group. For five years, I lived in the mountains with the NPA soldiers. Life was hard. We were always on the move, running from the military. Eventually, I tired of hiding in the mountains, so I sur-

rendered to the governor of Ilocos Norte. He treated me well, even helping me find a decent job. However, I still clung to my old bad habits, robbing houses and intimidating people.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:

A woman at my place of work named Loida was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Through her, I met Jovencio, and he began studying the Bible with me. But my old way of life had a strong hold on me. I would smoke

before Jovencio arrived for the Bible study session, and I still engaged in illegal activities. Finally, the police caught me breaking the law, and I spent 11 months in prison. During that time, I prayed to Jehovah, beseeching him for help. I asked for his forgiveness and for his holy spirit to guide and strengthen me.

In time, one of Jehovah's Witnesses visited me in prison and brought me a Bible. I read it and learned that Jehovah is merciful and loving and pardons errors. I realized that Jehovah had been merciful to me and had given me the opportunity to learn his ways. I asked him to give me the strength to overcome my bad practices. What I read at Proverbs 27:11 had an impact on me. I viewed that verse as if

Jehovah was talking to me directly. There it states: “Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me.”

After I was released from prison, I resumed my Bible study with the Witnesses, began associating with them at their meetings, and started applying Bible principles in my life. Eventually, with Jehovah’s help, I rid myself

of my bad habits. I then dedicated my life to Jehovah God.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: Despite my dark past, I am now happy. Although I was a slave to filthy habits, I have become a new person. (Colossians 3:9, 10) Today, I am honored to associate with Jehovah’s clean people and to help others learn about our almighty God, Jehovah.



“I wanted to represent Brazil.”

—JULIANA APARECIDA SANTANA ESCUDEIRO

AGE: 31

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: **BRAZIL**
HISTORY: **MARTIAL ARTS EXPERT**



MY PAST: I grew up in Londrina. Even though most in the area were poor, the district was clean and peaceful. When I was ten, my older brother encouraged me to join him in practicing a martial art called tae kwon do, which means “the way of the hands and the feet.” Dad was not in favor of my new sport but soon gave in.

I trained hard and won many tae kwon do championships in the state of Parana. Later, I won national championships, and in 1993, I was declared a Brazilian tae kwon do champion. I wanted to compete in international championships. However, my family was poor and did not have the means to pay my way abroad.

My hope was that tae kwon do would be included in the Olympics, and this did eventually happen. I wanted to represent Brazil at the Olympic Games, so I trained hard and also received sponsorship that enabled me to compete in France, Vietnam, South Korea, and Japan, and in the South American Games. My next goal was to participate in the Pan American Games, and I performed so well that I was selected to be one of the three who would compete at

that event in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in 2003.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: In 2001, my boyfriend and I met Jehovah’s Witnesses, and they began to study the Bible with us. At first, I was not really enthusiastic. I was always too tired to concentrate and often dozed off during the study session. Even so, what I was learning reached my heart—a fact that became obvious at my next big competition.

Because I was selected for the Pan American Games team, the tae kwon do masters made me compete in a preliminary

tournament. When my turn came to fight, I stood on the mat motionless—totally without motivation. All of a sudden, it dawned on me that a Christian should not fight with others—even in a sport! The Bible’s command to “love your neighbor as yourself” came to mind. (Matthew 19:19) I just turned around and left the floor without a second thought. People stared at me in disbelief.

When I got home, I sat down and thought about what I was going to do with my life. I grabbed a brochure published by the Witnesses that discussed what God requires of us. In it I saw a reference to Psalm 11:5, which says of Jehovah: “Anyone loving violence His soul certainly hates.” Those words of the psalmist hit home, and I decided to quit tae kwon do.

My tae kwon do masters were not happy. They tried to change my mind by saying that I was the best in the country and that I was

close to competing in the Olympic Games. But I had made up my mind.

By this time, my boyfriend and I were married. He was already joining the Witnesses in their public preaching work. He would come home so happy and tell me about all the conversations he had had with people. I knew that if I wanted to have the same privilege, I would have to make changes in my life. I resigned from my former religion and eventually qualified to become a baptized Witness.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: My husband and I are very happy and united because we strive to apply Bible principles in our marriage. I enjoy supporting him as he helps to care for the congregation we attend. I could have struggled to win a gold medal and become famous. But I feel that nothing that this unjust world has to offer can compare with the privilege of serving Jehovah God.



“My father never gave up on me.”

—INGO ZIMMERMANN

AGE: 44

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: GERMANY

HISTORY: DANCE CLUB SECURITY GUARD



MY PAST: I was born into a religiously divided household in the coal-mining town of Gelsenkirchen. My father was one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. But Mother opposed his efforts to raise me, my brother, and my two sisters accord-

ing to his religious beliefs. He worked ten hours or more a day driving trucks. Often he started work at two or three in the morning. Yet, he always cared for our spiritual training. However, I did not appreciate his efforts.

When I was 15, I became bored with the religious meetings that he made me attend, and I rebelled. A year later, I joined a boxing club. Over the next two years, I behaved in a way that made my father’s hair turn gray. I

moved away from home when I turned 18.

I was passionate about sports and trained up to six times a week—first boxing and then weight lifting. On the weekends, my friends

and I frequented dance clubs. On one occasion, I got into a fight with a sinister-looking customer but handled him easily. The owner of the club noticed and immediately offered me a job as a security guard. The money was good, so I accepted.

Each weekend, I stood at the entrance to the club and decided who could enter and who could not. Up to 1,000 people would pack the club, so I was kept busy. Fights were common. I was threatened with guns and broken bottles. Some of those to whom I refused entry or whom I threw out of the club waited outside to try to take revenge. I was 20 years old and thought I was invincible. Really, though, I was out of control—aggressive, proud, ambitious, and stubborn.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: My father never gave up on me. He arranged for *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines* to be sent to where I lived. They piled up in my room—unread. Then one day I decided to page through some of them. The articles I read about how the present political, economic, and religious system would end moved me to call my sister. She and her husband were Jehovah's Witnesses. They offered to study the Bible with me, and I accepted.

The principle recorded at Galatians 6:7 motivated me to make changes in my life. I knew from experience that whatever I do, say, or decide today will shape my life tomorrow. I was also very encouraged by the invitation at Isaiah 1:18, which says: "'Come, now, you people, and let us set matters straight between us,' says Jehovah. 'Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet, they will be made white just like snow.'" That scripture helped me from the beginning of my study not to feel unworthy or to feel that there was no way back for me.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Within six months, I had made dramatic changes in my life but not without a struggle. I needed to abandon the corrupt environment and rough association I had surrounded myself with. So I began telling my friends that I was studying the Bible and shared what I was learning. They began avoiding me and called me a priest. With my sister's help, I found another, more suitable job.

I also started going to meetings at the Kingdom Hall where my sister and her husband attended, even though it was 19 miles (30 km) away. There was a Kingdom Hall closer to my home, but I was nervous about meeting people who knew me from my childhood. I was also afraid of going from house to house, preaching in the area where I lived. What if I met someone whom I had recently thrown out of the club or someone to whom I had given drugs? However, I drew a lesson from my fitness training—the exercises that are the most difficult are the ones that are the most necessary. So once I qualified to do so, I went preaching as much as possible.

I had another challenge to overcome—I didn't like reading or studying. But I knew that if I wanted to develop strong faith, I would have to discipline myself to dig into the truths found in the Bible. I discovered that just as with weight lifting, you have to put forth effort if you want to gain strength.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I am alive! I still have to keep my weaknesses in check so that they do not get the upper hand. But I now enjoy a wonderful family life with my wife, who has a beautiful Christian personality. Among Jehovah's Witnesses, I have genuine friends in whom I can place complete trust. My father died five years ago, but before he passed away, he had the joy of receiving back his son.

A Leper Is Healed!

Instructions: Do this exercise in quiet surroundings. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are part of the event. Visualize the scene. Hear the voices. Feel the emotions of the characters. Let the account come to life.

Main characters: Naaman, Elisha, and an unnamed Israelite girl

Summary: The Syrian army chief Naaman is cured of a loathsome disease after an Israelite girl recommends that he see Elisha.

1 ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ 2 KINGS 5:1-19.

What emotions must the little Israelite girl have had to cope with, considering that she was taken from her God-fearing family? _____

What frustration do you perceive in Naaman—a mighty man with a debilitating disease? _____

What emotions do you sense in the dialogue between Naaman and his servants in verses 11 through 13? _____

What change of attitude on Naaman's part do you detect beginning in verse 15? _____

2 DIG DEEPER.

What factors might have contributed to Naaman's pride? (*Reread verse 1.*) _____

Using research materials at your disposal, find out something about leprosy in Bible times.* (For example, how serious was the disease? Was it contagious? How was it treated?) _____

* The skin disease known as leprosy in Bible times includes what is today called Hansen's disease.

What effect do you think Naaman's healing may have had on the little Israelite girl?

In what way might Elisha's response have tested Naaman? (See verse 10.)

3 APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT . . .

The dangers of pride.

Boldness in speaking up about your beliefs.

Jehovah's power to heal sickness.

4 WHAT ASPECT OF THIS ACCOUNT IS MOST MEANINGFUL TO YOU, AND WHY?



IF YOU
DON'T HAVE
A **BIBLE**,
ASK JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
FOR ONE, OR
READ IT ONLINE AT
www.watchtower.org

Traveling to the Most Distant Part of the Earth

"The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe. And after declaring the good news to that city and making quite a few disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch."—ACTS 14:20, 21.

COOL morning air fills the traveler's lungs. He pushes tired feet into worn sandals. Another full day of walking lies ahead.

With the early morning sun on his back, he follows the dusty road beyond the vineyard, through an olive grove, and up the steep hillside. Along the way, he encounters other travelers—farmers trudging to their fields, merchants urging along animals packed high with goods, and pilgrims heading for Jerusalem. The traveler and his companions talk to everyone they meet. Their goal? To fulfill Jesus' commission to be witnesses of him "to the most distant part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

This traveler could be the apostle Paul or Barnabas or any one of the hardy, first-century missionaries. (Acts 14:19-26; 15:22) They were tough, determined people. Travel was difficult. Describing his trials at sea, the apostle

Paul wrote: "Three times I experienced shipwreck, a night and a day I have spent in the deep." Journeying on land was not any easier. Paul said that he often encountered "dangers from rivers" and "dangers from highwaymen."—2 Corinthians 11:25-27.

What would it have been like to travel with those missionaries? How far would you journey in a day? What would you need to take with you, and where would you stay along the way?

Travel Over Land By the first century, the Romans had built an extensive road system connecting major centers of the empire. Those roads were carefully designed and solidly constructed. Many were 15 feet (4.5 m) wide, paved in stone, bordered with curbs, and marked by milestones. On such a road, a missionary like Paul could walk some 20 miles (32 km) a day.

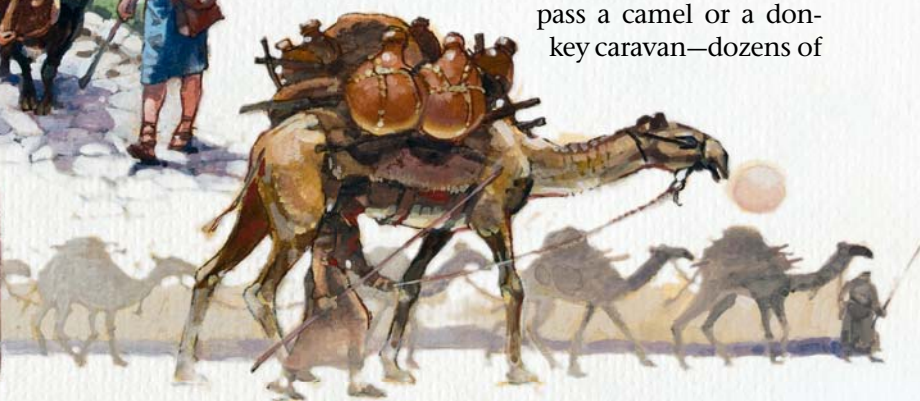
In Palestine, however, most roads were hazardous dirt paths, unfenced from fields and ravines. A traveler might encounter wild beasts or robbers; indeed, the road might be blocked altogether.

What would a traveler carry with him? Some of the essentials were a staff for protection (1), a bed roll (2), a money purse (3), an



extra pair of sandals (4), a food bag (5), a change of clothing (6), a collapsible leather bucket for drawing well-water en route (7), a water flask (8), and a large leather carryall bag for personal items (9).

The missionaries would be sure to encounter traveling merchants, who were distributing goods between local markets. Those merchants relied on the sure-footed donkey. It had no equal on the steep and rocky roads. It is reported that with a full load, a strong donkey could cover up to 50 miles (80 km) a day. Ox carts and wagons were slower, covering only 5 to 12 miles (8-20 km). But oxen could carry heavier loads and were ideal for short journeys. A traveler might pass a camel or a donkey caravan—dozens of



animals laden with goods from all over the world. A courier on horseback might speed by; he would be carrying mail and royal decrees to an outpost of the empire.

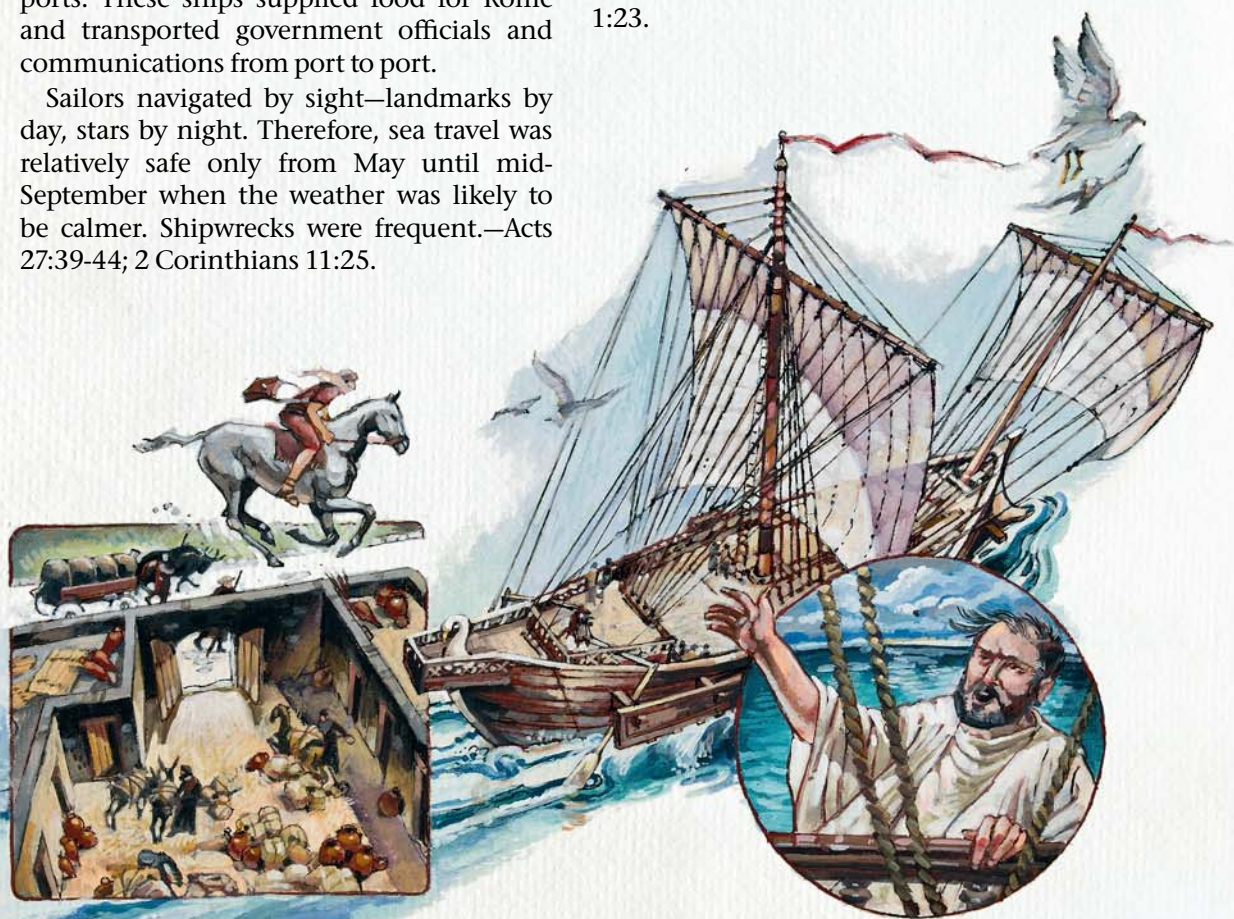
When night fell, travelers slept at the roadside in hastily prepared encampments. Some might stay at a caravansary, a walled enclosure with unfurnished rooms surrounding a courtyard. These dirty, unpleasant places provided only limited protection from the elements or from thieves. Whenever possible, traveling missionaries likely stayed with family or fellow believers.—Acts 17:7; Romans 12:13.

Travel on the Seas Small boats transported goods and people along coastal waters and across the Sea of Galilee. (John 6:1, 2, 16, 17, 22-24) Many larger ships traversed the Mediterranean, carrying cargo to and from distant ports. These ships supplied food for Rome and transported government officials and communications from port to port.

Sailors navigated by sight—landmarks by day, stars by night. Therefore, sea travel was relatively safe only from May until mid-September when the weather was likely to be calmer. Shipwrecks were frequent.—Acts 27:39-44; 2 Corinthians 11:25.

People did not choose sea travel because it was more pleasant than journeying by land. Passenger comfort on a cargo vessel, the main means of sea transport, was a low priority. Travelers lived and slept on deck in all kinds of weather. The dry space below deck was packed with precious goods. Passengers ate provisions that they brought with them. Only drinking water was provided. At times, the weather was extremely unstable. Unrelenting tempests and rough seas induced motion sickness, often for days on end.

Despite the hardships of land and sea travel, such missionaries as Paul spread the “good news of the kingdom” extensively in the then-known world. (Matthew 24:14) Just 30 years after Jesus told the disciples to witness about him, Paul could write that the good news was being preached “in all creation that is under heaven.”—Colossians 1:23.





DOES BIBLE PROPHECY POINT TO THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL?

Todd Bolen/Bible Places.com

TODAY the world nervously watches the Middle East. Rocket attacks, clashes of armed militias, and terrorist bombings are frequent occurrences. Add to this explosive mixture the very real possibility that nuclear weapons could be used. No wonder people everywhere are worried!

The world was also anxiously watching the Middle East in May of 1948. At that time, 62 years ago, the British mandate to occupy what was then called Palestine was ending, and war was imminent. The year before, the United Nations had authorized the creation of an independent Jewish State in a portion of the occupied territories. The surrounding Arab nations had vowed to prevent this at any cost. “The partition line shall be nothing but a line of fire and blood,” warned the Arab League.

It was Friday afternoon, May 14, 1948, at 4:00 p.m. The final hours of the British mandate were ticking away. In the Tel Aviv Museum, a small crowd of 350 onlookers were present by secret invitation for an eagerly anticipated announcement—the formal declaration of statehood for the modern-day nation of Israel. Security was tight, lest the

numerous enemies of the fledgling State attack the proceedings.

David Ben-Gurion, the leader of Israel’s National Council, read *The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*. It stated, in part: “We, members of the People’s Council, representatives of the Jewish Community of Eretz-Israel . . . by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel.”

**David Ben-Gurion,
May 14, 1948**

Israel Government Press Office,
Photographer: Kluger Zoltan

A Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy?

Some Evangelical Protestants believe that the modern State of Israel thus fulfilled a Bible prophecy. For example, in the book *Jerusalem Countdown*, clergyman John Hagee states: “This



momentous occasion had been recorded by the pen of the prophet Isaiah, saying, 'A nation shall be born in a day.' (See Isaiah 66:8.) . . . It was the greatest moment in prophetic history of the twentieth century. It was living evidence for all men to see that the God of Israel was alive and well."

Is that statement true? Did Isaiah 66:8 predict the establishment of the modern State of Israel? Was May 14, 1948, the "greatest moment in prophetic history of the twentieth century"? If the modern State of Israel is still God's chosen nation, and if he is using it to fulfill Bible prophecies, this would certainly be of interest to Bible students everywhere.

Isaiah's prophecy states: "Who has heard of a thing like this? Who has seen things like these? Will a land be brought forth with labor pains in one day? Or will a nation be born at one time? For Zion has come into labor pains as well as given birth to her sons." (Isaiah 66:8) The verse is clearly foretelling the sudden birth of an entire nation, as if in a single day. But who would cause this birth? The next verse gives a clue: "'As for me, shall I cause the breaking through and not cause the giving birth?' says Jehovah. 'Or am I causing a giving birth and do I actually cause a shutting up?' your God has said." Jehovah God makes it clear that the dramatic birth of the nation would be *his* doing.

Modern Israel is governed as a secular democracy that officially makes no claim to rely on the God of the Bible. Did the Israelis in 1948 recognize Jehovah God as the one responsible for their declaration of statehood? They did not. Neither the name of God nor even the word "God" was mentioned anywhere in the original text of the proclamation. The book *Great Moments in Jewish History* says this of the final text: "Even at 1:00 P.M. when the National Council met, its members could not agree about the wording

of the proclamation of statehood. . . . Observant Jews wanted a reference to 'the God of Israel.' Secularists balked. Compromising, Ben-Gurion decided that the word 'Rock' would appear instead of 'God.'"

The modern State of Israel to this day bases its claim to statehood on a UN resolution and what it calls the natural and historic right of the Jewish people. Is it reasonable to expect that the God of the Bible would perform the greatest prophetic miracle in the 20th century in behalf of a people who refuse to give him credit?

How Does the Modern Claim to Statehood Compare?

Modern Israel's secular attitude contrasts sharply with the situation in 537 B.C.E. Back then, the nation of Israel was indeed 're-born' as if in a day after being devastated and depopulated by the Babylonians 70 years earlier. At that time, Isaiah 66:8 was strikingly fulfilled when the Persian conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus the Great, authorized the return of the Jews to their homeland.—Ezra 1:2.

The Persian King Cyrus recognized Jehovah's hand in the matter in 537 B.C.E., and those who returned to Jerusalem did so for the express purpose of restoring the worship of Jehovah God and rebuilding his temple. The modern State of Israel has never officially declared any such desire or intention.

Still God's Chosen Nation?

In the year 33 C.E., the fleshly nation of Israel lost its claim to be God's chosen nation when it rejected Jehovah's Son, the Messiah. The Messiah himself put it this way: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her . . . Look! Your house is abandoned to you." (Matthew 23:37, 38) Jesus' statement came true when in 70 C.E., Roman legions

destroyed Jerusalem along with its temple and priesthood. But what was to become of God's purpose to have a "special property out of all other peoples, . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"?—Exodus 19:5, 6.

The apostle Peter, himself a fleshly Jew, answered that question in a letter written to Christians—both Gentile and Jewish. He wrote: "You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession,' . . . for you were once not a people, but are now God's people; you were those who had not been shown mercy, but are now those who have been shown mercy."—1 Peter 2:7-10.

Christians who were selected by holy spirit thus belong to a *spiritual* nation, their membership not being determined by birth or geographic location. The apostle Paul described the matter this way: "Neither is circumcision anything nor is uncircumcision, but a new creation is something. And all those who will walk orderly by this rule of conduct, upon them be peace and mercy, even upon the Israel of God."—Galatians 6:15, 16.

Whereas the modern nation of Israel offers to confer citizenship upon any natural or converted Jew, citizenship in what the Bible calls "the Israel of God" is given only to those who are "obedient and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:1, 2) Speaking of these members of the Israel of God, or spiritual Jews, Paul wrote: "He is not a Jew who is one on the outside, nor is circumcision that which is on the outside upon the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one on the inside, and his circumcision is that of the heart by spirit, and not by a written code. The praise of that one comes, not from men, but from God."—Romans 2:28, 29.

That verse helps us understand a controversial comment Paul made. In his letter to the Romans, Paul explained how the

unbelieving natural Jews were like branches of a symbolic olive tree that were lopped off so that "wild" Gentile "branches" could be grafted in. (Romans 11:17-21) Concluding this illustration, he states: "A dulling of sensibilities has happened in part to Israel until the full number of people of the nations has come in, and in this manner all Israel will be saved." (Romans 11:25, 26) Was Paul foretelling an eleventh hour mass conversion of the Jews to Christianity? Clearly, no such conversion has taken place.

By the expression "all Israel," Paul meant all of *spiritual* Israel—Christians who have been selected by holy spirit. He was saying that the failure of the natural Jews to accept the Messiah would not thwart God's purpose to have a spiritual 'olive tree' full of productive branches. This is in harmony with Jesus' own illustration of himself as a vine whose nonproductive branches will be lopped off. Jesus said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the cultivator. Every branch in me not bearing fruit he takes away, and every one bearing fruit he cleans, that it may bear more fruit."—John 15:1, 2.

Although the establishment of the modern State of Israel was not foretold in the Bible, the establishment of the nation of spiritual Israel certainly was! If you identify and associate with that spiritual nation today, you will reap eternal blessings.—Genesis 22:15-18; Galatians 3:8, 9.



What did Paul's illustration of the olive tree mean?



DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

“He Will Let Himself Be Found by You”

1 CHRONICLES 28:9

DO YOU know God? Answering that question is not as simple as it may seem. Truly knowing God involves becoming thoroughly familiar with his will and ways. We thereby develop a closeness with him that profoundly affects our entire way of life. Is such closeness really possible? If so, how do we find it? The answers can be discerned in King David’s advice to his son Solomon, found at 1 Chronicles 28:9.

Imagine the scene. David has ruled Israel for nearly 40 years, and the nation has prospered under his rule. Solomon, who will soon succeed him, is very young. (1 Chronicles 29:1) What parting counsel does David give his son?

Speaking from his own rich experience in serving God, David begins: “Solomon my son, know the God of your father.” David must mean something more than having head knowledge. Solomon is already a worshipper of David’s God, Jehovah. About a third of the Hebrew Scriptures have been completed, and Solomon is no doubt aware of what these sacred writings say about God. One scholar says that the Hebrew word rendered “know” can refer to “the most intimate acquaintance.” Yes, David wants his son to cultivate what David himself has treasured—a close personal relationship with God.

Such closeness should deeply affect Solomon’s outlook and way of life. David exhorts his son: “Serve him [God] with a complete

heart and with a delightful soul.”* Note that the charge to serve God comes *after* the admonition to know him. Truly knowing God leads to serving him. But he is not to be served with halfhearted hesitancy or doublehearted hypocrisy. (Psalm 12:2; 119:113) David implores his son to serve God wholeheartedly and willingly.

Why does David urge his son to worship with the right motive and thinking? David explains: “For all hearts Jehovah is searching, and every inclination of the thoughts he is discerning.” Solomon must not serve God just to please his father, David. God is looking for those whose hearts are sincerely inclined toward Him.

Will Solomon follow his father’s example and draw close to Jehovah? That is up to Solomon. David tells his son: “If you search for him, he will let himself be found by you; but if you leave him, he will cast you off forever.” To become a worshipper who is close to God, Solomon must put forth real effort to come to know Jehovah.[#]

David’s fatherly advice assures us that Jehovah wants us to become close to him. But to develop that closeness, we need to “search for him,” digging into the Scriptures in an effort to come to know him intimately. Knowing him should move us to serve him wholeheartedly and willingly. Jehovah desires—and deserves—nothing less from his worshippers. —Matthew 22:37.

* Some translations here read: “Serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind.”

[#] Sadly, although Solomon did start out serving with a complete heart, he did not remain faithful.—1 Kings 11:4.

OUR READERS ASK . . .

Should I join a religious group?

■ Are you cautious about joining a religious group because you are appalled by the hypocrisy and disunity of churchgoers and even the clergy? If so, a French proverb may sum up the way you feel, “He who is near the church is often far from God.”

Perhaps you respect the Bible and feel that governments and individuals should honor a person’s right to belong to a religious group. But you may wonder, ‘Does God really say that those who want to worship him acceptably *must* belong to an organized religion?’

The short answer is yes. Why can we be so sure? And will just any religious organization do?

Consider Jesus’ example. Did he belong to an organized religion? When he was young, Jesus joined with his Jewish family and others who had the custom of going to the temple in Jerusalem to engage in organized worship. (Luke 2: 41-43) As a grown man, Jesus joined with his fellow Jews in worshipping God at the local synagogue. (Luke 4:14-16) When speaking to a woman from a different religious background, Jesus said: “We worship what we know.” (John 4:22) Jesus here clearly identified himself as belonging to the Jewish form of religion.

Later, Jesus said that because the Jews as a nation rejected him, God would reject their corrupted form of worship. (Matthew 23:33-24:2) However, he indicated that those who want to worship God acceptably would have to belong to an organized group. He told his followers: “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves.” (John 13:35) A disciple of Christ who did not associate with his fellow believers could hardly show them love. In fact, Jesus plainly stated that there are only two religious paths. One he described as a



“broad and spacious” road that leads “off into destruction.” By contrast, he said: “Narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it.”—Matthew 7:13, 14.

Obviously, then, not just any religious path will do. The Bible warns against joining with those who “will maintain the outward appearance of religion but will have repudiated its power.” God’s Word further states, “avoid people like these.” (2 Timothy 3:5, *The NET Bible*) On the other hand, we benefit greatly from identifying and associating with those on the path leading to life. We gain encouragement and support now and a bright hope for the future.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

How can you determine which religious group is on that narrow path? Why not consider the Bible-based answers found in chapter 15 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?** That material will help you make an informed choice as to which religious organization you should join.

* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.



Why is it important to maintain an appreciative attitude?

SEE PAGE 6.



What can you say to console a grieving friend or relative?

SEE PAGES 9-11.



Are angels interested in us? SEE PAGE 16.



Did the Bible predict the establishment of the modern State of Israel? SEE PAGES 27-29.

Todd Bolen/Bible Places.com



Did Jesus want his followers to be part of an organized religion? SEE PAGE 31.

Would you welcome a visit?