

A photograph of a woman in a light blue shirt holding a young girl with long dark hair. The girl is looking down at a small, shallow metal bowl held by the woman. The bowl contains some food, possibly rice or noodles. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a simple outdoor or semi-outdoor setting.

JUNE 1, 2011

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

END OF
POVERTY
How?

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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WHAT IS EXTREME POVERTY LIKE?



Carmen with two of her children, drawing water from a river

EXTREME poverty is life threatening. It means not having enough food, water, and fuel as well as lacking adequate shelter, health care, and education. It affects one billion people, roughly the equivalent of the entire population of the Americas. Yet, most people in places like Western Europe and North America have never known a person in extreme poverty. So let us meet some now.

Mbarushimana lives in Rwanda, Africa, with his wife and five children. A sixth child died of malaria. He says: "My father had to divide his land among six of us. My share was so small that I had to move my family to a town. My wife and I work at carrying sacks of stones and sand. Our home has no windows. We get water from a well at the police station. We usually have one meal a day, but when there is no work, we have no food all day. I go out when that happens—I can't bear listening to the children when they cry for food."

Victor and Carmen are cobblers. They live in an isolated town in Bolivia with their five children. They rent one room in a dilapidated adobe building with a leaky tin roof and no electricity. The school is so crowded that Victor had to make a desk for his daughter so that she could attend. The couple must walk six miles (10 km) to cut firewood for cooking food and for boiling drinking water. "We have no toilet," says Carmen. "So we have to go down by the river, which is also used for bathing and garbage dumping. The children often get sick."

Francisco and Ilídia live in a rural area in Mozambique. Four of their small children survive; another died of malaria after a hospital did not admit him for treatment. The couple grow enough rice and sweet potatoes on their small plot to provide food for three months. Says Francisco: "Sometimes the rain fails to come or thieves steal the crop, so I make a little money by cutting and selling bamboo slats for

construction. We also fetch firewood from the bush, a two hours' walk away. My wife and I bring a load each, one for the week's cooking and one to sell."

Many feel that there is something very wrong with and unjust about a world in which 1 out of every 7 people lives like Mbarushimana, Victor, and Francisco, while billions of others enjoy unprecedented prosperity. Some have tried to do something about the matter. The following article considers their efforts and hopes.

EFFORTS TO END POVERTY

THE rich have already put an end to poverty—for themselves. But efforts to relieve all mankind of poverty have always failed. Why? Because the rich generally do not want anyone or anything to spoil their privilege. King Solomon of ancient Israel wrote: "Look! the tears of those being oppressed, but they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power."—Ecclesiastes 4:1.

Can people with influence and power change society to eliminate world poverty? Solomon was inspired to write: "Look! everything was vanity and a striving after wind. That which is made crooked cannot be made straight." (Ecclesiastes 1:14, 15) A look at modern efforts to end poverty illustrates this well.

Theories of Prosperity for All

In the 19th century, as a few nations amassed unprecedented wealth through

trade and industry, some influential people gave serious attention to the matter of poverty. Could the earth's resources be distributed more evenly?

Some theorized that *socialism* or *communism* could achieve an international classless society in which wealth was distributed fairly. Of course, the wealthy were deeply disturbed by these ideas. But the slogan "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" attracted wide acceptance. Many hoped that all nations would adopt socialism so that the world could become a Utopia. A few wealthy nations adopted aspects of socialism and established welfare states that promised to care for all citizens "from the cradle to the grave." They claim to have eliminated life-threatening poverty among their people.

Socialism, however, never achieved its goal of an unselfish society. The objective that citi-



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zens would work for the benefit of the community rather than for themselves proved elusive. Some resented having to provide for the poor, noting that the generous provisions for the poor made some among them disinclined to work. The Bible's words have proved true: "There is no man righteous in the earth that keeps doing good and does not sin. . . . The true God made mankind upright, but they themselves have sought out many plans."—Ecclesiastes 7:20, 29.

Another hope was called *the American Dream*—the dream of a place where anyone willing to work hard could become prosperous. Around the world, many nations adopted the policies—democracy, free enterprise, and free trade—that seemed to have made the United States rich. But not all nations could replicate the American Dream because North American wealth did not result merely from its political system. Its immense natural resources and easy access to international trade routes were important factors. In addition, the competitive world economic system produces not only winners who prosper but also losers who suffer. Could the nations that are prosperous be encouraged to help those that are still poor?

The Marshall Plan —A Way to End Poverty?

After World War II, Europe was devastated and many of its people felt threatened by starvation. The U.S. government was concerned about the popularity of socialism in Europe. So for four years, it gave vast sums of money to restore industry and agriculture

in those countries that would accept U.S. policies. This European Recovery Program, known as the Marshall Plan, was considered a success. In Western Europe, U.S. influence increased, and life-threatening poverty became rare. Was this the way to end global poverty?

The Marshall Plan's success led the U.S. government to offer aid to poor countries worldwide, helping them to develop agriculture, health care, education, and transport. The motive, freely admitted by the United States, is self-interest. Other countries also tried to extend their influence by offering foreign aid. Sixty years later, after spending many times the amount spent on the Marshall Plan, the results were disappointing. True, some previously poor nations achieved spectacular wealth, especially in East Asia. Elsewhere, however, even though aid resulted in fewer children dying and more of them receiving education, many nations were still extremely poor.

Foreign Aid—Why Disappointing

Helping poor nations to get out of poverty proved to be more difficult than helping wealthy nations to recover from war. Europe already had industry, trade, and transport. The economy just needed repairing. In poor countries, even when foreign aid provided roads, schools, and clinics, people still suffered extreme poverty because those countries lacked business, natural resources, and access to trade routes.

The cycles of poverty are complex and not easily broken. For example, disease

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⁺ CD also available.

[°] MP3 CD-ROM also available.

[°] Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

causes poverty, and poverty causes disease. Malnourished children can be so weakened physically and mentally that when they grow up, they cannot care for their own children. Also, when rich countries dump surplus food on poor countries as “aid,” local farmers and retailers go out of business, leading to more poverty. Sending money to the governments of poor countries may start another cycle: Aid is easy to steal, so it can lead to corruption, and corruption, in turn, can lead to more poverty. Basically, foreign aid fails because it does not tackle the fundamental cause of poverty.

The Cause of Poverty

Extreme poverty is the result when nations, governments, and individuals act only to promote and protect self-interest. For ex-

ample, governments of wealthy countries give low priority to ending world poverty because they are democratically elected and must cater to their voters. Thus, they prohibit farmers in poor countries from selling their produce in rich countries in order to prevent farmers in rich countries from losing business. Also, rulers of rich countries heavily subsidize their farmers to help them outsell farmers in poor countries.

Clearly, the cause of poverty—the tendency of people and governments to protect their own interests—is man-made. The Bible writer Solomon put it this way: “Man has dominated man to his injury.”—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

So, what hope is there of an end to poverty? Can any government change human nature?

A Law to Deal With Poverty

Jehovah God gave the ancient nation of Israel a body of law that if obeyed would prevent most poverty. Under the Law, every family, apart from the priestly tribe of Levi, received an inheritance of land. The family inheritance was secure because land could not be sold in perpetuity. Every 50 years, all land was to be restored to its original owner or his family. (Leviticus 25:10, 23) If because of illness, disaster, or indolence anyone had to sell his land, it was to be returned to him without payment in the Jubilee year. No family would sink into generations of poverty.

Another merciful provision of God’s Law allowed a man who had suffered adversity to sell himself into slavery. He would receive the sale price in advance to pay off his debts. If he had not repurchased himself by the seventh year, he was to be set

free and provided with seed and livestock in order for him to start farming again. In addition, if a poor person had to borrow money, the Law forbade fellow Israelites to charge interest. The Law also commanded the people to leave the edges of their fields unharvested so that poor people could glean. Thus, no Israelite would have to beg.—Deuteronomy 15:1-14; Leviticus 23:22.

History shows, however, that some Israelites did fall into poverty. Why did that happen? Israel did not obey Jehovah’s Law. Consequently, as in most lands, some people became rich landowners and others became landless poor. Poverty occurred among the Israelites because some individuals ignored God’s Law and put their own interests ahead of those of others.—Matthew 22:37-40.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE POOR



GOD'S WORD assures us: "Not always will the poor one be forgotten." (Psalm 9:18) The Bible also says of our Creator: "You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16) This hope presented in God's Word is not just a dream. Almighty God can provide what is needed to end poverty. What do the poor need?

An African economist commented that, ideally, poor countries need a "benevolent dictator." The implication is that to end poverty, it takes someone with power to act and kindness to care. We might add that a ruler who could end poverty for all would have to be a world ruler because extreme poverty is often the result of international inequality. In addition, a ruler who could end poverty would have to be able to do something about the reason for poverty—our selfish human nature. Where can such an ideal ruler be found?

God sent Jesus with good news for the poor. When Jesus stood up to read the commission he received from God, he said: "Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news to the poor." —Luke 4:16-18.

What Is the Good News?

God has appointed Jesus as King. This is indeed good news. He is the ideal Ruler to end poverty because (1) he is to rule all mankind and has the power to act; (2) he acts with compassion for the poor and teaches his followers to care for them; and (3) he can eliminate the cause of poverty, our inherited ten-

dency to act selfishly. Let us examine these three aspects of the good news.

1. Jesus' authority over all nations God's Word says of Jesus: "To him there were given rulership . . . that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him." (Daniel 7:14) Can you imagine the advantages of having just one government over all mankind? No longer will there be strife and struggle over the earth's resources. Everyone will benefit equally. Jesus himself gave the assurance that he will be a world Ruler with the power to act. He declared: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth."—Matthew 28:18.

2. Jesus' compassion for the poor Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus acted with compassion for poor people. For example, a woman who had spent all her resources to pay for medical treatment touched Jesus' garment, hoping for a cure. She had suffered a flow of blood for 12 years and was no doubt seriously anemic. According to the Law, she would cause anyone she touched to become unclean. But Jesus was kind to her. He said: "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be in good health from your grievous sickness."—Mark 5:25-34.

Jesus' teachings have power to change people's heart so that they too can act compassionately. For example, consider Jesus' answer to a man who wanted to know how to please God. The man knew that God wants us to love our neighbor, but he asked Jesus: "Who really is my neighbor?"

In reply, Jesus presented his famous illustration about a man traveling from Jerusalem

to Jericho who was robbed and left “half-dead.” A priest going down that road went by on the opposite side. A Levite did the same. “But a certain Samaritan traveling the road came upon him and, at seeing him, he was moved with pity.” He cleaned the man’s wounds, took him to an inn, and paid the innkeeper to care for the injured man. “Who . . . made himself neighbor to the man that fell among the robbers?” asked Jesus. “The one that acted mercifully” was the reply. Jesus then said: “Be doing the same yourself.” —Luke 10:25-37.

People who become Jehovah’s Witnesses study such teachings of Jesus and change their attitude about helping those in need. For example, in her book *Women in Soviet Prisons*, a Latvian author wrote about her illness while working at the Potma penal camp in the mid-1960’s. “All through my sickness [the Witnesses] were diligent nurses. I could not have wished for better care.” She added: “Jehovah’s Witnesses consider it their duty to help everyone, regardless of religion or nationality.”

When a financial crisis left some of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Ancón, Ecuador, without work or income, their fellow Witnesses decided on a way to raise money for them; they prepared food to sell to fishermen returning from a night of fishing (pictured at right). All in the congregation cooperated, including the children. They started at one o’clock each morning so that the food would be ready when the boats came in at four o’clock. The money raised by the Witnesses was shared according to each one’s need.

Such experiences demonstrate that Jesus’ example and teachings really do have the power to change people’s attitude toward helping those in need.

3. Jesus’ power to change human nature

The tendency of humans to act selfishly is a universally acknowledged fact. The Bible calls it sin. Even the apostle Paul wrote: “I find, then, this law in my case: that when I wish to do what is right, what is bad is present with me.” Then he added: “Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death? Thanks to God through Jesus Christ.” (Romans 7:21-25) Here Paul referred to how God, through Jesus, would rescue true worshippers from inherited sinful tendencies, one of which is selfishness, the root cause of poverty. How would this take place?

Some time after Jesus’ baptism, John the Baptizer introduced Jesus, saying: “See, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) Soon the earth will be filled with people who have been set free from inherited sin, including the tendency to seek their own interests. (Isaiah 11:9) Jesus will have eliminated the cause of poverty.

What a joy it is to contemplate the time when all will have what they need! God’s Word says: “They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble.” (Micah 4:4) Those words poetically describe the time when all will have satisfying work, security, and full opportunity to enjoy a world without poverty, to Jehovah’s praise.





LIVING WITHIN ONE'S MEANS HOW IT CAN BE DONE

IMAGINE that you have a bag with a hole in it, and you have the task of keeping the bag inflated. How would you do it? Well, as long as the volume of air you blow into the bag is at least as much as the amount escaping through the hole, you can keep the bag inflated.

That, basically, is what is meant by living within one's means. Your income can be likened to the air you blow into the bag. Your expenses are like the air escaping through the hole. The challenge is not to allow your expenses to get bigger than what your income can actually support.

Even though the basic idea sounds simple, putting it into practice and benefiting from it is quite another matter. People could spare themselves many financial woes if only they would endeavor to follow this basic concept. How can it be done? Where can we find guidelines that really work? The Bible is a source of much helpful information in this regard. Let us take a brief look at what it has to offer.

Bible Principles That Will Help

The Bible contains many practical principles that can help you manage your finances. We will examine just a few of these. See if

you agree that these principles can help you live within your means.

Have a plan, or a budget. To manage money effectively, you need to know how much money comes in and where it goes. The Bible says: "The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage, but everyone that is hasty surely heads for want." (Proverbs 21:5) Some use a simple envelope system. Each envelope represents a category of expense, such as "Food," "Rent," or "Clothing." Whether you use this simple method or something more elaborate, the important thing is that you know where your money is going, always putting necessities, not luxuries, first.

Avoid envy. Many in developing nations yearn for the things that people in industrialized nations have. On an individual level, many are tempted to want the things that their neighbors flaunt. This can be a trap. Maybe the neighbor cannot really afford them either. Why follow someone else in his foolishness and end up in financial trouble? The Bible warns: "He chases after wealth, the man of greedy eye, not knowing that want is

overtaking him.”—Proverbs 28:22, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

Keep your life simple. Jesus advised his followers to keep their eye “simple.” (Matthew 6:22) Setting your eyes on lobster and fine wine when all you can afford is dried fish and water can easily lead to financial ruin. According to one Asian Development Bank report, nearly a third of the people in the Philippines and over half of those in India live below the poverty line for Asia, which is about \$1.35 (U.S.) per day. When people have such meager income, it is the course of wisdom to focus on the basics. However, even in wealthier countries, the same principle can help keep people out of a lot of financial trouble.

Be content with what is really needed. This goes hand in hand with the counsel to keep your life simple. The Bible gives this advice at 1 Timothy 6:8: “Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things.” Some of the happiest people in the world have little money; nevertheless, they find satisfaction in what they do have, which includes not just material things but the love of family and friends.—Proverbs 15:17.

Avoid unnecessary debt. How true the Bible statement: “The rich is the one that rules over those of little means, and the borrower is servant to the man doing the lending”! (Proverbs 22:7) Although there are circumstances when going into debt may seem unavoidable, those who take on unnecessary debt just to buy something they want will often find themselves shackled to a very heavy financial millstone. This can be especially true when credit cards are used. *Time* maga-



‘We discuss in detail the amount that we can spend’

zine stated: “Once we’ve got our card in hand, our behavior becomes riddled with irrationalities.” Eric, who lives in the Philippines, says: “When I use a credit card, I often purchase more than when I use cash. It ruins my budget when I have to pay the bill.” How wise it is to be very, very careful in using easy credit!—2 Kings 4:1; Matthew 18:25.

Save up money before buying. Although it may seem old-fashioned, saving up money before making a purchase is actually one of the wisest ways to keep out of financial trouble. Doing so keeps many out of debt and its associated plagues, such as high interest rates, which ultimately add to the price of everything a person buys. In the Bible, the ant is depicted as being “wise” because of saving up “food supplies even in the harvest” for future use.—Proverbs 6:6-8; 30:24, 25.

Learning From Others

All the Bible counsel we considered may sound fine in principle, but is it really helping people to live within their means? Let us take a look at the experiences of some who have followed such counsel and successfully handled financial challenges.

Diosdado, a father of four, admits that the recent financial crisis has made it more difficult to satisfy his family's needs. Nevertheless, he recognizes the value of a budget. "I budget every single centavo of my earnings," he says. "I have a list of where I spend my money." Danilo follows the same principle. He and his wife experienced the failure of their small business. Still, they manage to make ends meet by careful budgeting. He says: "We know how much money we have coming in each month, and we also know how much is going out. Based on that, we discuss in detail how much we can spend."

To keep the budget in check, some have found it necessary to cut back in some areas. Myrna, a widow raising three children, says: "Instead of riding public transportation to get to Christian meetings, my children and I now walk." Myrna has made an effort to help her children learn the value of living a simple life. She says: "I have tried to set a good example in applying the principle at 1 Timothy 6:8-10, which shows the importance of being content with what one has."

Gerald, a father of two, has done similarly. He says: "During our family Bible study, we

discuss experiences of Christians who keep their attention focused on what really matters, spiritual things. The results are encouraging because our children do not clamor for things that are not really important."

Janet is single and serves as a full-time volunteer Bible teacher in the Philippines. She recently lost her job, but she keeps living within her means. "I do this by exercising self-discipline and being resourceful," she says. "Instead of going to malls, I seek out stores that offer better deals. Why should I pay higher prices when I can get things at a lower cost? I also avoid impulse buying." Janet sees the practical wisdom of saving money in advance. "If I happen to have extra, even just a little," she says, "I set it aside so that I have something to draw on if an unexpected expense comes along."



'I avoid impulse buying'

Regarding credit cards, Eric, mentioned earlier, says: "I have restricted myself from using a credit card except in emergency cases." Diosdado agrees: "To control myself, I usually leave my credit card at the office."

You Can Live Within Your Means

Yes, many are finding that even though the Bible is a book that focuses mainly on spiritual values, it also offers guidelines that can benefit us in material ways. (Proverbs 2:6; Matthew 6:25-34) By applying the Bible principles discussed in this article and by learning from others who have benefited from following these principles, you too can live within your means. Doing so, you can escape many of the woes and anxieties that millions suffer today.

'Instead of riding to Christian meetings, we now just walk there'



OUR READERS ASK . . .

Do all faithful Christians go to heaven?



■ Many have read Jesus' comforting words: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that *everyone* exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Did Jesus mean that all faithful worshippers of his Father, Jehovah God, would go to heaven to enjoy everlasting life in true happiness?

Note Jesus' thought-provoking statement: "No man has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man." (John 3:13) This implies that faithful worshippers in the past, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, had not gone to heaven. (Acts 2:34) Where, then, did they all go? In brief: The faithful of old are in the grave, sleeping in death, unconscious, awaiting resurrection.—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; Acts 24:15.

The Bible's first reference to heavenly life after death was also by Jesus. He told his apostles that he would prepare a place for them in heaven. (John 14:2, 3) This was something new for God's people. The apostle Paul later explained that after Jesus' death and resurrection to heaven, Jesus '*inaugurated* for his disciples a new and living way'—a way no other human had traveled before.—Hebrews 10:19, 20.

Does this mean that from then on all faithful ones would go to heaven? No, for resurrection to heaven is closely related to an assignment given only to *some* humans. On their last evening together, Jesus told his apostles that they would "sit on thrones to judge" in his heavenly

Kingdom. Thus, ruling with Jesus in heaven was to be their assignment.—Luke 22:28-30.

Besides the apostles, other humans would also be given this marvelous commission. In a vision, the apostle John saw Jesus with a group of resurrected ones in heaven described as 'a kingdom and priests to rule over the earth.' (Revelation 3:21; 5:10) How many of them were there? As in every government, only a limited number govern. So, too, with this heavenly Kingdom. Jesus, the Lamb of God, rules with 144,000 corulers "bought from among mankind."—Revelation 14:1, 4, 5.

True, 144,000 is a small number compared with the number of all faithful ones, past and present. But this is understandable because the 144,000 are resurrected to heaven for a specific sacred assignment of work. If you were to build a house, would you contract all the skilled builders in your area? No. You would need only as many as were required for the job. Similarly, not all faithful ones are chosen by God for the unique privilege of ruling with Christ in heaven.

This heavenly government will accomplish God's original purpose for mankind. Jesus and his 144,000 corulers will oversee the transformation of the earth into a global paradise, where an untold number of faithful ones will live forever in happiness. (Isaiah 45:18; Revelation 21:3, 4) This will include those in God's memory, who will be resurrected.—John 5:28, 29.

Every faithful worshipper of Jehovah—past or present—can receive the marvelous gift of everlasting life. (Romans 6:23) A few will receive life in heaven for a special assignment, and the great majority will receive life on earth in a global paradise.

ORDER is evident everywhere in God's creation. A "simple" yeast cell, for example, is a marvel of organization. It has roughly the same number of parts as a Boeing 777 jetliner. Yet, all the components have a fixed place and fit into a sphere just five microns* in diameter. Unlike jetliners, yeast cells can reproduce. What a marvel of order and organization!—1 Corinthians 14:33.

Organization is manifest not in physical creation only. The Bible shows that the spirit realm too is highly organized, in accord with the Creator's purpose. In a vision, the prophet Daniel saw a vast company of angelic creatures in God's heavenly court: "There were a thousand thousands that kept ministering to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand that kept standing right before him." (Daniel 7:9, 10) Imagine the organization that must be in place in order for this immense number of angels—one hundred million plus—to respond to and do God's bidding in behalf of his servants here on earth!—Psalm 91:11.

Though the Creator, Jehovah God, is the Supreme Organizer, he is not cold or rule-oriented. Rather, he is a warm, happy God who is concerned with the well-being of all his creation. (1 Timothy 1:11; 1 Peter 5:7) This is evident from the way he dealt with the ancient nation of Israel and the first-century Christians.

Ancient Israel—A Nation Well-Organized

Jehovah God used Moses to organize the Israelites for true worship. Consider just the encampment arrangements during their sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai. Things surely would have been chaotic had every family been allowed to pitch their tent

* A micron, or micrometer, is one millionth of a meter.

The encampment of the Israelites was well-organized

DOES GOD HAVE AN Organization?

wherever they wanted. Jehovah gave the nation specific instructions as to where each tribe was to set up camp. (Numbers 2:1-34) The Law of Moses also contained precise health and hygiene regulations—for example, regarding the disposal of human waste.—Deuteronomy 23:12, 13.

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they were a nation highly organized in many ways. The nation was divided into 12 tribes, each with a designated allotment of land. The Law that Jehovah gave to the nation through Moses covered every aspect of the people's life—worship, marriage, family, education, business, diet, farming, animal husbandry, and so on.* Although some laws were specific and detailed, all were an expression of Jehovah's care for his people and contributed to their happiness. By complying with these loving arrangements, the Israelites enjoyed Jehovah's special favor.—Psalm 147:19, 20.

While it is true that Moses was a talented leader, success or failure depended, not on his leadership skills, but on his loyalty to God's organization. For example, how did Moses decide what route to take through the wilderness? Jehovah provided direction by

* See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, pages 214-220, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



means of a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. (Exodus 13:21, 22) Although God used humans, it was Jehovah himself who organized and directed his people. The same was true in the first century.

The Early Christians Were Well-Organized

As a result of zealous preaching by the apostles and disciples, Christian congregations were established in many parts of Asia and Europe in the first century. Though these congregations were scattered about, they were not isolated, independent groups. Instead, they were well-organized, and they benefited from loving oversight by the apostles. For example, Titus was assigned by the apostle Paul to Crete “to get everything organized there.” (Titus 1:5, *The Jerusalem Bible*) And Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation that some brothers possessed “powers of organization,” or were “organizers.” (1 Corinthians 12:28, *The New Testament in Modern Speech; The Bible in Contemporary Language*) But who was responsible for such order? Paul said that “God compounded,” or “organized,” the congregation.—1 Corinthians 12:24; *The Riverside New Testament*.

Appointed overseers in the Christian congregation were not masters over fellow believers. Rather, they were “fellow workers” who followed the direction of God’s spirit, and they were expected to be “examples to the flock.” (2 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Peter 5:2, 3) It is the resurrected Jesus Christ, not a mere human or a group of imperfect men, who serves as the “head of the congregation.”—Ephesians 5:23.

When the congregation in Corinth began to do things in a way that was radically different from the way that other congregations handled matters, Paul wrote: “What? Was it from you that the word of God came forth, or was it only as far as you that it reached?”

(1 Corinthians 14:36) Paul used this rhetorical question to correct their thinking and to help them understand that they were not to act independently. Congregations grew and prospered when they followed the direction of the apostles.—Acts 16:4, 5.

An Expression of God’s Love

What about today? Some may be reluctant to attach themselves to a religious organization. Biblical evidence, however, shows that God has always used his organization as he carries out his purpose. He organized his worshippers in ancient Israel, and he organized the early Christians in their worship.

Is it not logical, therefore, to conclude that Jehovah God still directs his people, as he did in the past? Yes, having his worshippers organized and unified is an expression of his loving care for them. Today, Jehovah uses his organization in accomplishing his purpose toward mankind. How can his organization be identified? Consider the following criteria.

■ **True Christians are organized to accomplish a work.** (Matthew 24:14; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Jesus commanded his followers to preach the Kingdom good news to all nations, a task that would be impossible without an international organization. To illustrate, you can easily feed one person on your own, but if you have to feed many thousands, even millions, you will need a well-organized group of people whose efforts are coordinated. In fulfilling their commission, true Christians serve “shoulder to shoulder,” or “cooperate in [God’s] service.” (Zephaniah 3:9; *Byington*) Would a multinational, multilingual, multiracial work be possible without a unified, harmonious organization? The answer is obvious.

■ **True Christians are organized to support and encourage one another.** A lone mountaineer can decide where he wants to climb, and he does not have to look after less experi-



To carry out the international preaching work requires organization

enced climbers. However, if he has an accident or gets into difficulty, he will be in serious danger, as there will be no one to assist him. Isolating oneself is truly unwise. (Proverbs 18:1) For Christians to carry out Jesus' command, they must help and support one another. (Matthew 28:19, 20) The Christian congregation provides much-needed Biblical instruction, training, and encouragement for all to keep going and not to give up. Where would one go to be instructed in Jehovah's ways if there were no organized Christian meetings for instruction and worship?—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

■ **True Christians are organized to serve God in unity.** As Jesus' sheep listen to his voice, they become "one flock" under his leadership. (John 10:16) They are not scattered among independent churches and groups; nor are they divided over doctrinal matters. Rather, they all "speak in agreement." (1 Corinthians 1:10) To dwell in unity, we need order, and order requires organization. Only a unified brotherhood can have God's blessing.—Psalm 133:1, 3.

Genuine love for God and love for Bible truth have drawn millions to an organization that meets these and other Biblical criteria. As an organized and unified body of people, Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide endeavor to do God's will. They are assured of his promise: "I shall reside among them and walk among them, and I shall be their God, and they will be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16) This wonderful blessing can be yours too if you worship Jehovah God with his organization.



DOOR-TO-DOOR MINISTRY



DISASTER RELIEF



ASSEMBLIES



CONSTRUCTION OF PLACES OF WORSHIP



LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

Is There Hope for the Dead?

This article raises questions you may have asked and shows where you can read the answers in your Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses would be pleased to discuss these answers with you.

1. What is the hope for the dead?

When Jesus arrived at Bethany near Jerusalem, his friend Lazarus had been dead for four days. Jesus went to the grave site with Martha and Mary, the sisters of the deceased man. Soon, a crowd gathered. Can you imagine the joy of Martha and Mary when Jesus raised Lazarus back to life?—*Read John 11:20-24, 38-44.*

Martha believed that the dead would rise. Faithful servants of Jehovah have long known that in the future, God will resurrect the dead to live on earth again.—*Read Job 14:14, 15.*



Adam was created out of dust

2. What is the condition of the dead?

Although a force of life, or “spirit,” keeps humans and animals alive, we are not spirits that merely inhabit a body of flesh. (Ecclesiastes 3:19; Genesis 7:21, 22) We are physical creatures made out of dust. (Genesis 2:7; 3:19) When our brain dies, our thoughts perish. Thus, after being resurrected, Lazarus said nothing of his experience in death because the dead are unconscious.—*Read Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10.*

Clearly, the dead cannot suffer. So the teaching that God torments people after death is false. It slanders God. The idea of tormenting people in fire is disgusting to him.—*Read Jeremiah 7:31.*



3. Can we speak with the dead?

The dead cannot speak. (Psalm 115:17) But when wicked angels speak to people, they may deceptively claim to be the spirit of a dead person. (2 Peter 2:4) Jehovah forbids attempting to speak with the dead.—*Read Deuteronomy 18:10, 11.*

4. Who will come back to life?

In the coming new world, millions of people who are in the grave will come back to life. Even some who practiced bad things because they did not know Jehovah will be resurrected.—*Read Luke 23:43; Acts 24:15.*

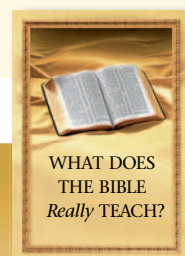
Resurrected ones will be able to learn the truth about God and to exercise faith in Jesus by obeying him. (Revelation 20:11-13) Those who come back to life and do good things will be able to enjoy life forever on earth. However, some resurrected ones will continue doing bad things. Their resurrection will turn out to be “a resurrection of judgment.”—*Read John 5:28, 29.*



5. What does the resurrection tell us about Jehovah?

The resurrection is possible because God sent his Son to give his life for us. So it is an expression of Jehovah’s love and undeserved kindness.—*Read John 3:16; Romans 6:23.*

For more information, see chapters 6 and 7 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.





DID YOU KNOW?

Was it of some special significance that the apostle Peter is mentioned as having lodged with a tanner before being told to go to Cornelius?



A TANNERY IN FEZ,
MOROCCO

■ The account in Acts says that Peter stayed “for quite a few days . . . in Joppa with a certain Simon, a tanner,” who had “a house by the sea.” (Acts 9:43; 10:6) The work of a tanner was considered unclean and demeaning from a Jewish perspective. The Talmud put tanners on a level below dung collectors. Simon’s work brought him into regular contact with the dead bodies of animals, meaning that he would be in a constant state of ceremonial impurity. (Leviticus 5:2; 11:39) According to different sources on the subject, Simon may well have used seawater in his

work, and his workshop was likely located on the outskirts of the town because tanning was “a malodorous process.”

Despite this, Peter evidently had no objection to lodging with Simon. This shows that perhaps Peter had learned to reject prevailing Jewish prejudices toward people considered impure, just as Jesus had rejected such prejudices before him.—Matthew 9:11; Luke 7:36-50.

What is the meaning of Jesus’ words “you yourself said it”?



■ When charged by Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, to declare openly whether he was Christ, the Son of God, Jesus answered: “You yourself said it.” (Matthew 26:63, 64) What did he mean?

Jesus was not trying to evade Caiaphas’ question. The expression “you yourself said it” was apparently a common Jewish idiom affirming that a statement was true. For example, the Jerusalem Talmud, a Jewish religious work compiled in the fourth century C.E., tells of a Jewish man who when asked if a rabbi had died, replied: “You said it.” This was taken as confirmation that the rabbi was, in fact, dead.

Jesus recognized the high priest’s authority to put him under oath to state the facts. Moreover, to remain silent could have been construed as a denial that Jesus was the Christ. So Jesus’ response: “You yourself said it” was an affirmative reply to the high priest. In Mark’s parallel account, when directly challenged by Caiaphas to reveal if He was the Messiah, Jesus courageously replied: “I am.”—Mark 14:62; see also Matthew 26:25 and Mark 15:2.



DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

Comfort for the Brokenhearted

J'EHOVAH could never love me.' So said one Christian woman who has struggled with depression much of her life. She convinced herself that Jehovah must be distant from her. Is Jehovah really far from those of his worshippers who may be depressed? The comforting answer is found in the inspired words of the psalmist David, as recorded at Psalm 34:18.

David knew the effect that extreme distress can have on a faithful worshipper of Jehovah. As a young man, David lived as a fugitive, relentlessly pursued by Saul, a jealous king bent on killing him. David sought refuge in what he might have thought to be the last place that Saul would look—the enemy city of Gath, in Philistine territory. But after being recognized, David narrowly escaped by feigning insanity. David credited God with delivering him, and based on this experience, he wrote Psalm 34.

Did David believe that God is far away from those who in the face of distress become dejected or feel unworthy of His notice? David writes: "Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves." (Verse 18) Let us see how those words convey comfort and hope.

"Jehovah is near." One reference work says that this phrase is "an expressive way of saying that the Lord is attentive and watchful, always ready to help and to save his people." It is reassuring to know that Jehovah watches over his people. He sees what they are going through in these "critical times," and he knows their innermost feelings.—2 Timothy 3:1; Acts 17:27.

"Those that are broken at heart." In some cultures, "a broken heart" has reference to unrequited love. But the psalmist's words refer to "more general grief and sorrow,"

says one scholar. Yes, even faithful worshippers of God may at times experience extreme hardships that break their heart.

"Those who are crushed in spirit." Discouraged ones may become so low in their own eyes that they momentarily lose all hope. A handbook for Bible translators says that this expression may be rendered "those who have nothing good to look forward to."

How does Jehovah respond to those who are "broken at heart" and "crushed in spirit"? Does he keep distant from them, feeling that they are unworthy of his love and attention? On the contrary! Like a loving parent who holds and comforts a child in distress, Jehovah is near to his worshippers who cry out to him for help. He is eager to comfort and soothe their broken heart and crushed spirit. He can give them the wisdom and strength needed to cope with any trials they may face.—2 Corinthians 4:7; James 1:5.

Why not find out how you can draw closer to Jehovah? This compassionate God promises: "I reside . . . with the one crushed and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly ones and to revive the heart of the ones being crushed." —Isaiah 57:15.



SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR JUNE:

■ Psalms 26-59

When Was the Bible Written?

The Bible is an exceptional book. More than three billion people consider it sacred text. It has been called the best-selling book of all time, with an estimated 6,000,000,000 copies printed (in whole or in part) in over 2,400 languages.

ALTHOUGH the Bible is the most widely read book in history, there are many ideas in circulation regarding when it was written, especially the Hebrew Scriptures, often called the Old Testament. You may have read some such theories in journals and books, or you may have watched scholars explain them in television documentaries. Here are some statements that highlight certain contemporary views.

■ *“Biblical literature was written down largely in the eighth through the sixth century B.C.E., or, between the days of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.”*

■ *“For the past two hundred years biblical scholars have usually assumed that the Hebrew Bible was written and edited mostly in the Persian and Hellenistic periods (the fifth through second centuries B.C.E.).”*

■ *“All the texts of the Hebrew Bible in its present form date to the Hellenistic era (as late as the 2nd-1st century [B.C.E.]).”*

How should a Christian who believes that “all Scripture is inspired of God” view these conflicting ideas? (2 Timothy 3:16) To find the answer, let us consider the two sides of the matter.

The Bible’s Own Timetable

The Hebrew Bible contains numerous chronological references. These indicate that the early books were written in the time of Moses and Joshua, about 3,500 years ago.* Samuel, David, Solomon, and others added writings during the 11th century B.C.E. These were followed by historical, poetic, and

* For a detailed study of the Bible’s chronology, see the book *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, pages 447-467, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Egyptian scribes produced written material before the time of Moses

© DeA Picture Library / Art Resource, NY



2000 B.C.E.

1800

(Time line shows approximate years when Bible books were completed)

prophetic books, which are dated from the ninth down to the fifth century B.C.E.

Copies or fragments of these Bible books, with the exception of the book of Esther, are among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Dating done by carbon 14 (radioactive carbon) and paleography (the study of ancient scripts) confirms that the oldest of these scrolls are from about 200 B.C.E. to 100 B.C.E.

What the Critics Say

A major reason for questioning the Bible's own timetable is the Bible's claim to divine inspiration. About this, in his book *The Old Testament Documents*, Professor Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., writes: "The [Bible] text is guilty by virtue of its divine claims, miracles and talk about God." Scholars with a secular mind-set argue that the Bible should be examined critically like any other book.

For a time, Darwin's theory of evolution was used to explain that religions evolved from simple to complex, from animism to polytheism, and climaxed with monotheism. Because the early Bible books describe a monotheistic worship of God, some reason that they must have been written much later than claimed.

Criticism of the Bible has taken many forms since then. For example, a recently published dictionary of the Old Testament contains detailed articles on form criticism, historical criticism, literary/narrative criticism, history of Pentateuchal criticism, source criticism, and traditio-historical criticism.

Though scholars differ when it comes to dating the Bible books, many favor the theory proposed by Professor R. E. Friedman. He writes: "Ancient writers produced documents of poetry, prose, and law over many hundreds of years. And then editors used these documents as sources. Those editors fashioned from these sources the Bible."

The book *Faith, Tradition, and History* discusses a number of these and other critical views of the Bible. In summary, however, it observes: "Though scholars are united in their lack of confidence in Scripture and supremely confident in their own theories, they are highly critical of each other's views."

In Defense of the Bible's Timetable

The early Bible books were written on perishable material. It is therefore unrealistic to expect that the original writings or early



Moses completed Genesis by 1513 B.C.E., writing on perishable material

1600

Genesis
1513 B.C.E.

1400

Joshua

21

1200

copies from the time of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, or David will ever be found. It is possible, however, to study *indirect* historical evidence, which suggests that accepting the dates established by the Bible itself is reasonable, as a number of respected scholars and archaeologists do. What does such evidence tell us? Consider a few examples.

■ **Did written literature exist 3,500 years ago in the ancient Middle East when, as the Bible indicates, Moses and Joshua lived?** Historical, religious, legal, and literary texts were produced in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. What about Moses and the Israelites? The *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* answers: “There is no reason to doubt that written literature did exist in Late Bronze Age [about 1550 to 1200 B.C.E.] Canaan.” It adds: “There is no reason, from the point of view of ancient writing practice, why the texts Moses is said to have written were not, nor much of the rest.”—Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27, 28; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:24.

■ **Did Bible writers use ancient sources as references?** Yes, some refer to ‘books,’ which may have been documents of state, genealogical records, historical works, and tribal and family documents.—Numbers 21:14; Joshua

10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18; 1 Kings 11:41; 2 Chronicles 32:32.

■ **Why have no ancient Bible documents older than the Dead Sea Scrolls been found?**

The journal *Biblical Archaeology Review* explains: “Papyrus and leather documents have not survived from most of Palestine, only from very arid regions such as the area around the Dead Sea. These materials rot in damp soil. The fact that they have not been discovered does not mean, therefore, that they did not exist.” In fact, hundreds of clay seals that were used to seal documents have been found. The papyrus and leather documents have perished as a result of fire or damp soil, but the clay seals have survived. These seals date approximately from the ninth to the fifth century B.C.E.

■ **How were the Bible manuscripts preserved?** The book *The Bible as It Was* argues: “The stories, psalms, laws, and prophecies that have reached us today as part of the Bible must therefore have been copied many, many times even within the biblical period itself. . . . If these texts were repeatedly copied within the biblical period itself, it was because they were *used*; they played some part in daily life. . . . No one would go to the trou-

Hundreds of clay seals have survived

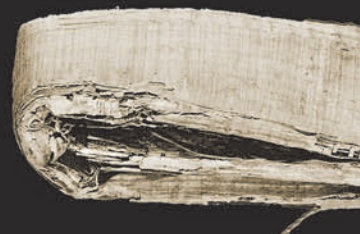
Dated from 900 to 500 B.C.E.



A folded papyrus document, bound with a string and clay seal

Dated from 449 B.C.E.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Theodora Wilbour from the collection of her father, Charles Edwin Wilbour



ble of copying texts for no purpose.”—Deuteronomy 17:18; Proverbs 25:1.

For the early Bible books, this meant a copying process covering almost 1,500 years until the first century C.E. This process of accurate copying included “modernizing outdated grammatical forms and spellings, a process universal in the ancient Near East,” says the book *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*.^{*} This brings into question the credibility of criticism based on forms and styles of the written text.

When Was the Bible Written?

Is it logical to insist that the absence of manuscripts that date back to the time of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and others proves that the Bible books were not written as early as claimed? Many scholars agree that the absence of evidence is *not* evidence of absence. Realistically, how much perishable written material could have been preserved? Egyptologist K. A. Kitchen estimated, for example, that nearly all Egyptian papyri written before Greco-Roman times have perished.

Those who respect the Bible may also ask

^{*} See the article “Ancient Scribes and the Word of God” in the March 15, 2007, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 18-20.

themselves, ‘How did Jesus view the Hebrew Bible?’ The matter of dating was never a controversy then. Jesus, like the Jews in general, evidently accepted the chronological information in the Scriptures. Did he accept the authorship of the early Bible books?

Jesus referred to the writings of Moses. For example, he mentioned “the book of Moses.” (Mark 12:26; John 5:46) He referred to accounts in Genesis (Matthew 19:4, 5; 24:37-39); Exodus (Luke 20:37); Leviticus (Matthew 8:4); Numbers (Matthew 12:5); and Deuteronomy (Matthew 18:16). He stated: “All the things written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and Psalms about me must be fulfilled.” (Luke 24:44) If he acknowledged the authorship of Moses and others, he undoubtedly accepted the accuracy of the Hebrew Bible’s chronological information.

When, then, was the Bible written? Is the Bible’s own timetable reliable? We have noted many scholars’ critical views as well as the Bible’s own information, indirect historical evidence, and Jesus’ view. Based on these, will your answer show that you are in agreement with Jesus when he said in prayer to his Father, Jehovah God: “Your word is truth”? —John 17:17.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were wrapped in linen and preserved in jars. They are the oldest surviving Bible writings yet found
Dated from 200 to 100 B.C.E.

Shrine of the Book, Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem





A LETTER FROM MADAGASCAR



It Sounded Like Beautiful Music

MY HUSBAND and I were heading for our new missionary assignment—the island of Madagascar. We said our last good-byes and swallowed our tears and fears, trusting that Jehovah would plant us where we would grow.

We'll never forget our first congregation meeting in our new assignment. The brother presiding at the *Watchtower* Study seemed as though he were conducting a symphony orchestra. Our grasp of the language was so limited that the spoken word sounded like beautiful music. It would be a long time before we could be sure of what was being said.

The first time I understood an auxiliary question, I accidentally answered it out loud.

Those sitting close to me heard it, and I had to muffle my laughter with my hands. I was embarrassed yet excited that I had actually understood something being said!

Instead of being the one who was setting an example for others in the ministry, I felt that I was the one being held by the hand. The brothers and sisters lovingly told me how to give an understandable presentation in the field ministry, showing me what to say and which scriptures to use.

I remember one day when I was in the ministry, a child called out, “*Vazaha! Vazaha!*” This is the common Malagasy term for “foreigner.” We quickened our pace in hopes that other children would not be summoned to bellow out the same refrain. Then a boy scolded the one doing the yelling. “She’s not a foreigner,” he said, “she can speak our language!” The local sister who was with me had to interpret what they said because they were speaking too quickly for me to understand. Still, I felt a flush of satisfaction. Madagascar was finally beginning to feel like home.

On more than one occasion when I felt lonely, a tiny hand crept into one of mine, and I looked down to see a smiling face that





Preaching with Hasina

seemed so happy to see me even though I could not communicate very well. The young ones in the congregation are such a blessing from Jehovah. One young sister, Hasina, has become my personal interpreter. When no one else understands me, she seems to. And she often comes to my rescue when I am trying to communicate with my friends in the congregation, explaining to them what I actually mean.

My husband and I were in a congregation that was about to divide to form a new one. This meant that some Bible studies needed to be turned over to others to conduct because the students lived in the new congregation's territory. One sister encouraged me to conduct one of her studies. I was afraid and insisted that I was not yet ready, but she was very persuasive. She assured me that with Jehovah's help, I could do it. With soft, kind eyes and in the simplest language possible, she told me that I would soon be able to teach others the way I would like to.

Those words were so encouraging to me.



Since then, that student has progressed nicely. One day when I was outside, I heard her call my name. She and her husband were on their way to have their marriage legalized. He has begun to study, and they have several spiritual goals that they are trying to attain, including the goal of baptism. That brought me joy, though I know that it is not us but Jehovah who draws a person to him.

We have learned so much in this new assignment. Although we miss our friends and family back home, we feel as though we have brought a part of them here with us. We often speak of them to the brothers and sisters here, and now they even ask about them and about how they are doing. We look forward to the time when our "families" can unite and meet one another.

I still hear "music" when people speak. But now I understand the words. I'm looking forward to the time when I can add to the music in a harmonious way instead of sounding out rapid notes once in a while like a trumpet. Jesus said: "Never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties." (Matthew 6:34) So we'll just keep learning one "note," or one word, at a time. And for now, I will keep tuning my ears, mind, and heart so as to be able to work side by side with our patient and loving brothers and sisters here in Madagascar.





TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

Have You Ever Felt Like an Outsider?



AN OUTSIDER is someone others don't accept as part of their group. He or she may be of a different skin color or nationality or have a different way of speaking or doing things. ***Do you ever feel like an outsider?—****

Let's talk about a man who felt like one. His name was Mephibosheth. Let's learn who he was and why he felt the way he did. If you ever feel like an outsider, you can learn a lot from Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, David's dear friend. Before Jonathan died in war, he said to David: 'Be good to my children.' David became king. Years later he remembered Jonathan's words, and Mephibosheth was still alive. When he was little, he had a bad accident. He could hardly walk for the rest of his life. ***Can you see why he might have felt like an outsider?—***

David wanted to be good to Jonathan's son. So David arranged for Mephibosheth to have a home near his in Jerusalem, and a place was kept for him at David's dining table. The man Ziba, along with his sons and servants, was given to Mephibosheth to be his servant. David truly honored Jonathan's son! ***Do you know what happened then?—***

David came to have troubles in his home. Absalom, one of David's sons, turned against him and tried to be king. David had to run for his life. Mephibosheth wanted to

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

go with David when many others went. These friends of David knew that he was the rightful king. But Mephibosheth could not go because he could hardly walk.

Then Ziba told David that Mephibosheth had stayed behind because he really wanted to be king. David believed that lie! So he gave Ziba all of Mephibosheth's property. Soon David won the war against Absalom and came back to Jerusalem. Now David heard Mephibosheth's side of the story. David decided that Mephibosheth and Ziba should share the property. ***What do you think Mephibosheth did?—***

He did not complain that David's decision was unfair. Mephibosheth knew that the king needed peace so that he could do his job well. So he said that Ziba could keep all the property. What really mattered to Mephibosheth was that Jehovah's servant David was back in Jerusalem as king.

Mephibosheth suffered a lot. He often felt like an outsider. But Jehovah loved him and took care of him. ***What can we learn from this?—*** Even when we do what is right, some may tell lies about us. Jesus said: *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you."* People even killed Jesus! We can be sure that if we do what is right, the true God, Jehovah, will love us—and his Son, Jesus, will too.

READ IN YOUR BIBLE

1 Samuel 20:15-17, 41, 42

2 Samuel 4:4; 9:1-10; 19:24-30

John 15:18





I DREAMED OF A LIFE ON WHEELS

AS TOLD BY ZOYA DIMITROVA

At 15 years of age, I was enjoying the realization of my dream—happily performing and traveling with the circus. Then, on September 4, 1970, tragedy struck. One moment I was gracefully sailing through the air. The next moment I was plummeting to the ground.

I WAS born on December 16, 1952, and lived with my parents and one sister in Sofia, Bulgaria. At that time, Bulgaria was a Communist country where religion was tolerated but very much discouraged. The majority of people simply did not believe in God, and of those who did, many chose to keep their beliefs secret. Although my family was nominally Orthodox, I had no religious upbringing and gave no thought to God.

It became evident at an early age that my real interest was in sports activities of all kinds but particularly gymnastics. When I was 13, a man came to our school searching for a girl to be trained for the circus. I was recommended by my gymnastics teacher. I was thrilled to be driven in the manager's car, an American automobile, to interviews and trials by a group of trainers. To my delight, I was chosen. This was the start of a strict regimen of rigorous training and practices that lasted for more than two years. Then, when I was 15, my training was completed and I began my life on wheels—a life of touring with the circus. At first, I traveled throughout Bul-

garia and then to countries of the former Soviet Union and even to Algeria, Hungary, and the former Yugoslavia.

For three blissful years, I was living my dream. Then, while I was performing in Titov Veles, Macedonia, the accident described at the outset took place. I was performing an acrobatic act high above the crowd. My partner, suspended upside down, would twirl me up in the air and then catch me as I came down. I missed his hands, and when my safety rope broke, I plunged 20 feet (6 m) to the ground. I was rushed to the hospital, where I was found to have a broken arm, several broken ribs, and a broken spine. I remained in shock for a few days and had no memory of what had happened. When I recovered sufficiently, I realized that I was paralyzed from the waist down. Being young, however, I remained optimistic that with therapy or an operation, I would be able to walk again and possibly even return to performing with the circus.

For the next two and a half years, I received treatment in several sanatoriums, still clinging to the hope of recovery. Eventually,

I had to accept the fact that my dream had ended. Now, ironically, I had to adjust to “a life on wheels” far different from the one I had dreamed of—a life in a wheelchair.

The Start of a New Life

After living such an active life, I thought that this adjustment was impossible. Having lost all hope, I fell into depression. Then, in 1977 a young man named Stoyan came to my door. Upon learning that he was the brother of a former colleague, I immediately invited him in. During the course of our conversation, he asked me about my hope of recovery. Disillusioned and disappointed with life, I replied that there was no hope. When he told me that only God could help me, I replied bitterly, “Well, if there is a God, why am I in such a situation?”

With this opening, Stoyan, who had recently become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses while working in the United States as a circus artist, very kindly explained to me the Bible’s wonderful promises for the future. I was thrilled to learn that soon the earth will become a paradise. The promise that “death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore” touched my heart. (Revelation 21:4) How I longed to regain my physical health! I immediately agreed to have a regular Bible study. Thus

started a new life for me. At last, I had found the basis for real hope!

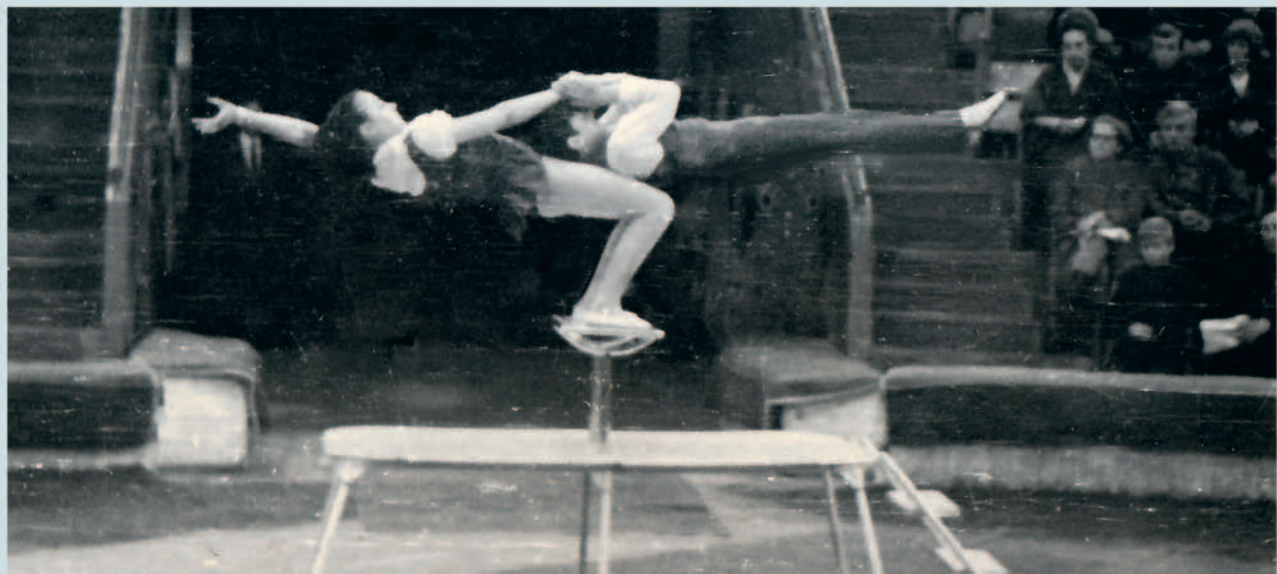
I eagerly looked forward to my Bible study each week. First I studied with Stoyan and then with Totka, a very kind Witness. With her help, my knowledge of Bible truth grew rapidly, and I dedicated my life to Jehovah God. At the time, there was no one in Sofia who was qualified to perform my baptism, so I had to wait for the visit of a brother from Macedonia. On September 11, 1978, about one year after I started studying the Bible, I was baptized in the bathtub in my apartment. My baptism as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses brought me deep joy, and my life took on real meaning.

The Bible truth that I learned burned like a fire within me. I eagerly shared my newfound hope with everyone who came to my home. Unfortunately, no one seemed to take me seriously, perhaps thinking that as a result of my accident, I was not completely normal.

A Grievous Mistake

At the time, Jehovah’s Witnesses were under ban in Bulgaria, and there were only a few Witnesses throughout the country. There were no congregation meetings that I could attend, and association with others who shared my faith was very limited. This,

I began my performing career at age 15





“My greatest joy and encouragement come from regularly attending Christian meetings”

coupled with my failure to realize the danger of close association with those who do not live by Bible standards, led to my making a grievous mistake.

My conscience tormented me relentlessly, and I experienced the excruciating pain of being alienated from Jehovah God. Crushed and ashamed, I poured my heart out to Jehovah in prayer, begging his forgiveness. Later, with the help of loving Christian elders, I was restored spiritually, and I regained my joy in serving Jehovah. How I treasure the privilege of serving Jehovah with a clean conscience and associating with his clean organization!

Happy Despite Limitations

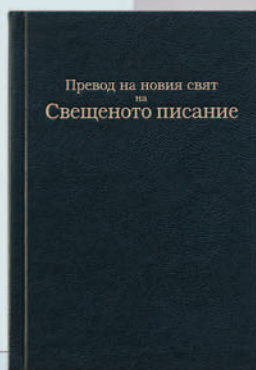
My accident 40 years ago shattered my dream of a life of performance and travel and left me confined to a wheelchair. Yet, I do not look back with sadness and regret, as if my life were a failure. Bible truth has helped me to realize that my dream of happiness and fulfillment in a life with the circus was connected with things of little permanent val-

ue. I have witnessed how former coworkers who continued their careers with the circus have experienced bitter disappointment in their lives. On the other hand, I have found the greatest treasure—a personal relationship with my Creator, Jehovah God. This has brought me far greater joy than I could ever have found in a life with the circus.

In addition, I have experienced the joy of seeing many others gain knowledge of Bible truth and dedicate their lives to our loving God, Jehovah. When I began studying the Bible in 1977, there were only a handful of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Bulgaria. Even as late as 1991, when Jehovah’s Witnesses were first registered after the fall of the Communist regime, there were not many more than a hundred Witnesses in the entire country. What a joy it has been for me to see the steady increase in the number of Kingdom publishers to the present peak of almost 1,800!

There is still much work to be done in Bulgaria. Many are searching for knowledge of God’s Word. This can be seen in the out-

"A real highlight in my life was the release of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in Bulgarian"



standing attendance of 3,914 at the 2010 Memorial of Christ's death. I thrill to contemplate this proof that Jehovah has blessed the small beginnings in Bulgaria. Before my very eyes, "the small one" has grown to become "a mighty nation," as foretold at Isaiah 60:22.

Another source of joy and a real highlight in my life was the release of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in Bulgarian. This took place in August 2009 at the "Keep on the Watch!" District Convention that was held in Sofia. The release of this Bible in my own language was a dream come true! It will undoubtedly be instrumental in helping many more gain knowledge of Bible truth in Bulgaria.

Although my disability limits what I can personally do in preaching the good news of God's Kingdom, I find great joy in sharing Bible truth with my neighbors and anyone who comes to my door. On one occasion, I called from my balcony to a neighbor as she was passing by. She accepted my invitation to come in, and after I shared several encouraging thoughts from the Bible with her, she immediately accepted my offer of a Bible study. I was overjoyed when she was later baptized as my spiritual sister. I have had the privilege of helping four people to the point of dedicating their lives to Jehovah.

Perhaps my greatest joy and encourage-

ment come from regularly attending Christian meetings with over a hundred brothers and sisters, who have become like a family to me. Living in a country where special transportation services for the elderly and infirm are not provided, I find it a challenge to go to congregation meetings. But I am very grateful for the loving care of a young brother. For each meeting, he carries me from my apartment to his car, from his car into the Kingdom Hall, and then back again. How I thank Jehovah for the privilege of being part of such a loving spiritual family!

Looking back, I can see that things in my life have turned out very differently from what I had dreamed of in my youth. Serving Jehovah has brought me the greatest happiness possible now and a marvelous hope for the future. I treasure God's promise that in the paradise earth, "the lame one will climb up just as a stag does." (Isaiah 35:6) I look forward with full confidence to the day when I will leap from my wheelchair, restored to perfect health and vigor.



“WILL HUMANS RUIN THIS EARTH?”

● From outer space, planet Earth looks like a beautiful blue-and-white jewel. But closer inspection reveals that our home is in trouble. Why? The answer is simple: Humans have been poor tenants. What is more, they are ruining the earth not only literally by means of pollution, deforestation, and exploitation but also morally and spiritually through violence, bloodshed, and sexual immorality.

This sad state of affairs was foretold some two thousand years ago in amazing prophecies recorded in the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Revelation 11:18) The Bible also foretold that God—not any human—will fully correct matters. These important topics will be developed in the public talk “Will Humans Ruin This Earth?” The discourse will be delivered at the “Let God’s Kingdom Come!” District Conventions of Jehovah’s Witnesses, beginning in May in the United States and continuing around the world.

You are cordially invited to attend the convention nearest you. For specific details, please contact Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area or write to the publishers of this magazine. The Web site www.jw.org lists the convention locations in Canada and the United States.

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