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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

RELIGION
AND POLITICS
SHOULD THEY MIX?

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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Many God-fearing people feel that religion should be involved in politics. They believe that religion can play a vital part in solving humankind's problems. However, other sincere believers think that religion and politics should be separate. What do you personally think of religion's role in politics? Should those powerful forces work hand-in-hand?

A Question for Jesus

JESUS CHRIST has been described as "the most influential figure in the religious history of mankind." So, imagine that we could ask him the question, Should religion be involved in politics? What would he say? While on earth, he answered that question by his words and deeds. For instance, in his renowned Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave guidelines that help his followers to discern what role they should play in their communities. Let us consider some points from that famous sermon.

Touch the Life of Others

Jesus described the attitude his followers should have toward the world. He stated: **“You are the salt of the earth;** but if the salt loses its strength, how will its saltiness be restored? It is no longer usable for anything but to be thrown outside to be trampled on by men. **You are the light of the world.** . . .

Jesus made it clear that he did not want his followers to isolate themselves from society

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens.” (Matthew 5:13-16) Why did Jesus compare his followers to salt and light?

Jesus’ words imply that his followers are like salt, not for just a small group, but for all of mankind. They are like light, not for a limited number of people, but for all who want to see clearly. By using those word pictures, Jesus made it clear that he did not want his followers to isolate themselves from society. Why not?

Note the following: Salt cannot preserve food if it is not mixed with a food item. A lamp cannot dispel darkness from a room if the lamp is kept away from that room. It is, therefore, no wonder that Jesus never commanded his disciples to move to an isolated corner of the earth to establish communities

of believers. Nor did he encourage his followers to live insulated lives behind the walls of religious institutions. Instead, as salt needs to touch food and light needs to dispel darkness, so Christians need to have an impact on the lives of others.

“No Part of the World”

However, Jesus’ instructions that his followers should interact with their fellow men raise an important question about a Christian’s attitude toward politics. Why so? Shortly before his death, Jesus prayed to God in behalf of his followers: “I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. **They are no part of the world,** just as I am no part of the world.” (John 17:15, 16) So, then, how is it possible for Christians to be no part of the world but, at the same time, be involved in their local community? To find out, let us consider three additional questions:

- How did Jesus view politics?
- What should Christians do today?
- How do Christian teachings affect communities?



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

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How Did Jesus View Politics?



THE Gospel writers describe several events in Jesus' ministry that brought him face-to-face with politics. For instance, shortly after Jesus' baptism at about the age of 30, the Devil offered him the position of *world ruler*. Later in his ministry, a crowd wanted to make him their *king*. Still later, people tried to turn him into a *political activist*. How did Jesus react? Let us consider these events.

World ruler. The Gospels state that the Devil offered Jesus rulership over "all the kingdoms of the world." Think of how much good Jesus could have done for suffering mankind if he had wielded the power of a world ruler! What politically oriented individual sincerely concerned with mankind's advancement could resist such an offer? But Jesus refused it.—Matthew 4:8-11.

King. Many of Jesus' contemporaries were desperate for a ruler who could solve their

economic and political problems. Impressed by Jesus' abilities, the people wanted Jesus to join the political process. What was his reaction? Gospel writer John states: "Jesus, knowing they were about to come and seize him to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain all alone." (John 6:10-15) Clearly, Jesus refused to become involved in politics.

Political activist. Note what happened days before Jesus was put to death. Disciples of the Pharisees, who favored independence from the Roman Empire, joined by Herodians, members of a political party favoring Rome, approached Jesus. They wanted to force him to take a political position. They asked if the Jews should pay taxes to Rome.

Mark recorded Jesus' response: "'Why do you put me to the test? Bring me a denarius to look at.' They brought one. And he said to them: 'Whose image and inscription is this?'

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[°] CD also available.

[°] MP3 CD-ROM also available.

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

They said to him: 'Caesar's.' Jesus then said: 'Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God.' " (Mark 12:13-17) Commenting on the reason for Jesus' response, the book *Church and State—The Story of Two Kingdoms* concludes: "He refused to act the part of a political messiah and carefully established both the boundary of Caesar and that of God."

Problems such as poverty, corruption, and injustice did not leave Christ unmoved. In

fact, the Bible shows that he was deeply touched by the pitiful state of the people around him. (Mark 6:33, 34) Still, Jesus did not start a campaign to rid the world of injustices, although some tried hard to get him embroiled in the controversial issues of the day.

Clearly, as these examples show, Jesus refused to get involved in political affairs. But what about Christians today? What should they do?

What Should Christians Do Today?

TRUE Christians today do not participate in politics. Why not? Because they follow Jesus' example. He said about himself: "I am no part of the world." Regarding his followers, he stated: "You are no part of the world." (John 15:19; 17:14) Consider some reasons why Christians should not become involved in politics.

1. Human ability is limited. The Bible states that humans have neither the ability nor the right to govern themselves. "It does not belong to man who is walking," wrote the prophet Jeremiah, "even to direct his step."—Jeremiah 10:23.

Just as humans were not created to fly successfully on their own strength, so they were not created to rule successfully by themselves. Speaking about the limits of government, historian David Fromkin noted: "Governments are composed of human beings; therefore they are fallible and their prospects are uncertain. They exercise a certain power, but only a limited one." (*The Question of Government*) No wonder the Bible

warns us not to put our trust in man!—Psalm 146:3.

2. Wicked spirit forces currently have an influence. When Satan offered Jesus world rulership, Jesus did not deny that the Devil had the power to offer him all the kingdoms of the world. In fact, on a later occasion, Jesus called Satan "the ruler of the world." Some years later the apostle Paul described Satan as "the god of this system of things." (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4) Paul wrote to fellow Christians: "We have a wrestling . . . against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) Behind the scenes, wicked spirit forces are the real rulers of this world. How should that fact influence our view of politics?

Think of this comparison: Just as small boats are swept along by powerful sea currents, human political systems are pulled along by powerful, wicked spirit forces. And just as the sailors in those boats can do little to change those powerful currents, politi-



Jehovah's Witnesses actively promote God's Kingdom, not political reform



cians can do little to change the influence of those powerful spirit forces. Those forces are bent on corrupting humans beyond reform and on causing "woe for the earth." (Revelation 12:12) Therefore, real change can be brought about only by a person who is more powerful than Satan and his demons. That Person is Jehovah God himself.—Psalm 83:18; Jeremiah 10:7, 10.

3. True Christians give allegiance only to God's Kingdom. Jesus and his disciples knew that at a set time, God himself would establish a government in heaven to rule over the entire earth. The Bible calls this government God's Kingdom and reveals that Jesus Christ has been appointed as its King. (Revelation 11:15) Since that Kingdom affects all humans, Jesus made "the good news of the kingdom of God" the main subject of his teachings. (Luke 4:43) He also taught his disciples to pray: "Let your kingdom come." Why? Because under that Kingdom, God's will is sure to be done in heaven and on earth.—Matthew 6:9, 10.



What, then, will happen to man-made governments? The Bible answers that the governments "of the *entire* inhabited earth" will be destroyed. (Revelation 16:14; 19:19-21) If an individual truly believes that God's Kingdom is about to remove all man-made political systems, he logically would refrain from supporting those political systems. After all, if he tried to prop up doomed, man-made governments, he would, in effect, be taking a stand against God.

While true Christians do not participate in politics, does that mean that they have no interest in trying to improve the communities in which they live? Consider the answer given in the next article.

How Do Christian Teachings Affect Communities?



How is the Christian message like salt?



THE preceding articles considered why genuine Christians do not participate in politics. How, though, can Christians show that they are interested in improving the communities in which they live? One way is by following Jesus' command: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

There is a link between following Jesus' command to "make disciples" and carrying out his instruction to be like salt and light to the world. (Matthew 5:13, 14) What is the connection? And what effect can that work have on people?

Christ's Message —Preserving and Enlightening

Salt is a preservative; it can prevent decay. Similarly, the message that Jesus instructed his followers to carry to people in all nations has a preserving influence. Those who accept and apply Jesus' teachings protect themselves from the moral decay so prevalent today. In what way? They learn how to avoid practices that are harmful to health, such as smoking, and they develop such qualities as love, peace, long-suffering, kindness, and goodness. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Those qualities make them an asset to society. Christians who share this preserving message with their

neighbors make a valuable contribution to their community.

What about the metaphor of light? Just as the moon reflects the light from the sun, so Christ's followers reflect the "light" from Jehovah God. They serve as reflectors by means of the enlightening message they preach and the good works they do.—1 Peter 2:12.

Jesus further highlighted the similarity between being a light and being a disciple by saying: "People light a lamp and set it, not under the measuring basket, but upon the lampstand, and it shines upon all those in the house. Likewise let your light shine before men." A shining lamp placed upon a lampstand is clearly visible to all those around it. Similarly, the preaching activities and other fine works that true Christians perform should be clearly visible to those living around them. Why? Jesus said that those who see the fine works will give glory, not to the Christians, but to God.—Matthew 5:14-16.



A Collective Responsibility

When Jesus said, "*You* are the light of the world" and "let *your* light shine," he was addressing all his disciples. Jesus' commission cannot be accomplished by a few individuals scattered in different religions. Instead, all believers are "the light." Seven million Jehovah's Witnesses, who live in more than 235 lands, believe that it is their collective responsibility to visit their neighbors to share the message that Christ wants his followers to proclaim.

What is the theme of the message of Jehovah's Witnesses? When Jesus gave his preaching commission, he did not instruct his followers to preach social or political reforms, union of Church and State, or any other secular ideology. Instead, he fore-

told: "This *good news of the kingdom* will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) Thus, in obedience to Jesus' instructions, true Christians today continue to speak to their neighbors about God's Kingdom—the only government capable of bringing an end to Satan's wicked system and ushering in a righteous new world.

In fact, when reading the Gospel accounts, two main things stand out about Jesus' ministry that have a bearing on the activities of true Christians today. Both are considered in the next article.



How is Christ's message like a lamp in a dark place?

Sincere Believer and Responsible Citizen

How to Be Both

WHAT were two of the characteristics of Jesus' ministry? First, Jesus sought to change individual hearts, not political institutions. For instance, note what Jesus stressed in his Sermon on the Mount. Just before he spoke about the need to be like salt and light, he told his audience that true happiness belongs to those who are "conscious of their spiritual need." He added: "Happy are the mild-tempered ones, . . . the pure in heart, . . . the peaceable." (Matthew 5:1-11) Jesus helped his followers to see the importance of adjusting their thinking and feelings to God's standard of what is good and bad and the importance of serving God wholeheartedly.

Second, when Jesus saw human suffering, his compassion for his fellow men moved him to alleviate their misery. However, he did not make it his goal to eliminate all suffering. (Matthew 20:30-34) He cured sick people, but sickness remained a fact of life. (Luke 6:17-19) He brought relief to the oppressed, but injustice continued to cause suffering. He provided food for the hungry, but famines continued to plague mankind. —Mark 6:41-44.

Changing Hearts and Alleviating Suffering

Why did Jesus focus on changing hearts and alleviating suffering but not on changing institutions or *eliminating* distress? Jesus knew that God had purposed to use His Kingdom at a future time to put an end to all human governments and erase the causes of all suffering. (Luke 4:43; 8:1) Therefore, when the disciples once urged Jesus to spend more

time on curing the sick, Jesus said to them: "Let us go somewhere else, into the village towns nearby, that I may preach there also, for it is for this purpose I have gone out." (Mark 1:32-38) Jesus alleviated the physical suffering of many, but he gave priority to preaching and teaching God's word.

In their preaching work today, Jehovah's Witnesses strive to imitate Jesus. They are moved to *alleviate* suffering by giving practical help to individuals in need. But the Witnesses do not strive to *eliminate* the

Jesus sought to change hearts,
not political institutions

world's injustices. They believe that God's Kingdom will erase the causes of all suffering. (Matthew 6:10) Like Jesus, they endeavor to change *hearts* but not political *institutions*. That approach is realistic because man's main problems are, not political, but moral.

Responsible Citizens

At the same time, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that it is their Christian responsibility to be good citizens. Hence, they honor and respect governmental authority. Through their publications and their witnessing work, they encourage their neighbors to be law-abiding. However, when a government demands what is in direct conflict with what God commands, the Witnesses do not comply. They "obey God as ruler rather than men." —Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7.

Jehovah's Witnesses visit all those in their community to offer Bible education free of

Jehovah's
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citizens



charge. As a result of this education, millions of hearts have been changed. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people are helped to overcome such damaging practices as smoking, drunkenness, misuse of drugs, gambling, and sexual promiscuity. They have become morally responsible citizens because they have learned to apply Bible principles in their lives.—See the article “The Bible Changes Lives,” on page 18 of this magazine.

In addition, Bible education helps family members to deepen their respect for one another and to improve communication—between spouses as well as parents and children and among the children themselves. These are factors that strengthen family bonds. Stronger families, in turn, result in stronger communities.

After reviewing the points that have been considered in these articles, what do you think: Does the Bible approve of those who mix religion and politics? The answer is clear; it does not. But should true Christians be responsible citizens? Yes, they should. How can they do so? By following Jesus' command to be like salt and like light to the world.

Those who strive to apply these practical directions of Christ will bring benefits to themselves and their families—as well as to the community in which they live. Jehovah's Witnesses in your area will be glad to share more information with you about the Bible education program that is currently being carried on in your community.*

* If you prefer, you can also contact Jehovah's Witnesses at www.watchtower.org





KEYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

Rebuilding Trust

Steve*: “I never imagined that Jodi would commit adultery. I lost all trust in her. Words cannot describe how difficult it was for me to forgive her.”

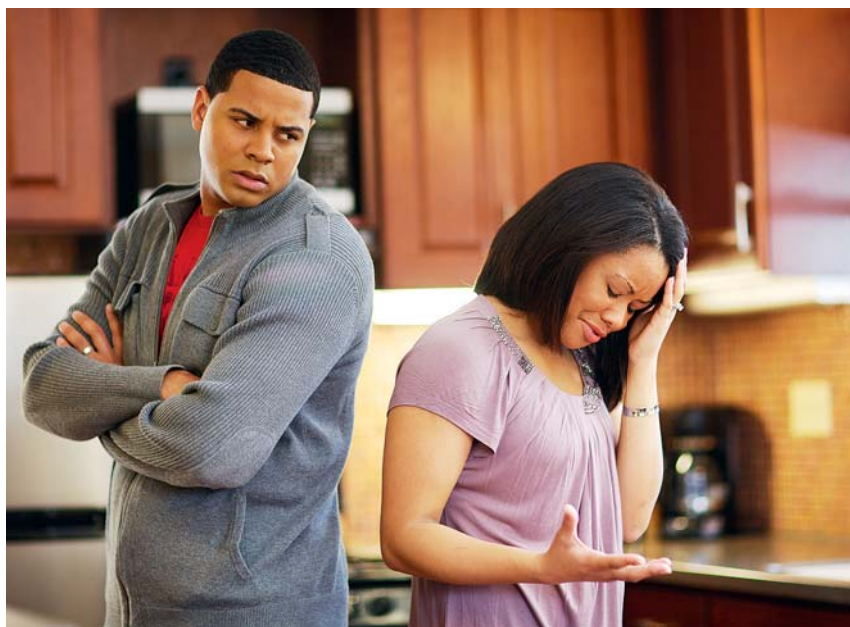
Jodi: “I understand why I lost Steve’s trust. It took many years for me to prove my regret.”

THE Bible gives victims of adultery the option to decide whether to divorce or not.[#] (Matthew 19:9) Steve, quoted above, decided not to get a divorce. Both he and Jodi resolved to save their marriage. They soon learned, however, that this meant much more than just continuing to live together. Why? Because, as noted in their comments, Jodi’s infidelity shattered all trust between them. Since mutual trust is vital to marital happiness, they had work to do.

If you and your mate are striving to save your marriage after as great a setback as adultery, you obviously face a difficult challenge. The first several months after the news is broken may be especially trying. But you can succeed! How can you rebuild trust? The wisdom found in the Bible can help. Consider the following four suggestions.

* Names have been changed.

[#] For help in making such a decision, see *Awake!* issues of April 22, 1999, page 6, and August 8, 1995, pages 10 and 11.



1 Be Honest With Each Other. “Now that you have put away falsehood, speak truth,” wrote the apostle Paul. (Ephesians 4: 25) Lies, half-truths, and even silence undermine trust. So you need to speak openly and honestly with each other.

At first, you and your mate may be too upset to discuss the infidelity. Eventually, though, you will need to talk candidly about what happened. You may choose not to dis-

cuss every detail, but avoiding the subject itself is not wise. “Initially, I found talking about the affair incredibly difficult and distasteful,” says Jodi, quoted above. “It was something I deeply regretted and just wanted to lock away and forget.” However, this lack of communication caused problems. Why? Steve says, “Because Jodi didn’t want to talk about the infidelity, I remained suspicious.” In retrospect, Jodi acknowledges, “Not discussing it with my husband hindered the healing process.”

Without a doubt, any discussion about the betrayal will be painful. Debbie, whose husband, Paul, committed adultery with his secretary, says: “I had a lot of questions. How? Why? What did they talk about? I became an emotional wreck, thinking about it constantly and asking even more questions as the weeks went by.” Paul says: “Understandably, at times the conversations Debbie and I had became heated. But we always apologized to each other later. Those honest discussions drew us closer together.”

How can you take some of the strain out of such discussions? Remember that your primary purpose is, not to punish your partner, but to learn from the tragedy and to strengthen your marriage. For example, Chul Soo and his wife, Mi Young, examined their relationship in the light of Chul Soo’s infidelity. “I discovered that I had been too busy with private interests,” says Chul Soo. “I was also overly concerned with pleasing others and meeting their expectations. I had been giving them most of my time and attention. As a result, I had been spending little time with my wife.” This insight enabled both Chul Soo and Mi Young to make changes that, in time, helped strengthen their marriage.

TRY THIS: If you are the unfaithful mate, refrain from making excuses or blaming

your spouse. Take responsibility for your actions and the hurt you caused. If you are the injured mate, do not scream at your spouse or use abusive language. By avoiding such speech, you will encourage your spouse to continue talking openly to you.—Ephesians 4:32.

2 Work as a Team. “Two are better than one,” states the Bible. Why? “Because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other can raise his partner up.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10) That principle is especially true when you are working hard to rebuild trust.

Together, you and your mate can make a stand against the mistrust that has infected your relationship. However, you *both* need to be committed to saving the marriage. If you try to cope individually, you may be setting yourself up for more problems. You need to view each other as partners.

That is what Steve and Jodi found. “It took time,” says Jodi, “but Steve and I worked together as a team to build a solid union. I was determined never to cause him such pain again. And although Steve was hurting, he resolved not to let our marriage fall apart. Each day, I looked for ways to reassure him of my loyalty, and he continually showed his love for me. For this, I will always be grateful to him.”

TRY THIS: Together, resolve to work as a team to restore trust in your marriage.

3 Replace Old Habits With New. After warning his listeners against adultery, Jesus counseled: “If, now, that right eye of yours is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you.” (Matthew 5:27-29) If you are the offending mate, can you think of actions or attitudes that, for the

sake of your marriage, should be torn out and thrown away?

Obviously, you need to break off contact with the other party in the adultery.* (Proverbs 6:32; 1 Corinthians 15:33) Paul, quoted earlier, changed his work schedule and his cell-phone number so that he no longer interacted with the other woman. However, those efforts failed to break all contact. Paul was so determined to rebuild trust with his wife that he left his job. He also got rid of his cell phone and used only his wife's phone. Has the inconvenience been worth the effort? His wife, Debbie, says: "It has been six years, and I still occasionally worry that she will try to make contact. But I now trust that Paul will not succumb to temptation."

If you are the guilty mate, you may also need to make changes to your personality. For example, you may have a flirtatious manner, or you may enjoy fantasizing about romantic relationships with other people. If so, "strip off the old personality with its practices." Replace former habits with new ones that will strengthen your mate's confidence in you. (Colossians 3:9, 10) Has your up-bringing made it difficult for you to express affection? Even if it feels awkward at first, be generous in your expressions of love and reassurance to your spouse. Steve recalls: "Jodi would often show affection with a touch of her hand, and she regularly said 'I love you.'"

For a time, you would do well to be completely open about your daily activities. Mi Young, mentioned earlier, states: "Chul Soo made a point of telling me everything that happened during each day, even the most unimportant things, in an attempt to show me he had nothing to hide."

* If for a period of time some contact is unavoidable (such as at work), this should be limited to what is absolutely necessary. Deal with the other party in the presence of others and with your mate's full knowledge.

TRY THIS: Ask each other what actions are likely to help rebuild trust. List them, and then put them into practice. Also, add to your routine some activities that you can enjoy together.

4 Know When to Move On. Do not be quick to conclude that it is time to start living as if everything were back to normal. Proverbs 21:5 cautions: "Everyone that is hasty surely heads for want." It will take time—perhaps years—to restore trust.

If you are the betrayed mate, allow yourself time to forgive fully. Mi Young recalls: "I used to think it was strange if a wife could not forgive her unfaithful husband. I could not understand why she would be so angry for so long. However, when my husband was unfaithful to me, I understood why forgiveness is difficult." Forgiveness—and trust—are likely to come gradually.

That said, Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 states that there is "a time to heal." At first, you may feel that isolating yourself emotionally from your spouse is the safest course. However, doing so indefinitely will not help you to rebuild trust in your mate. To heal the breach, forgive your mate and express that forgiveness by sharing your intimate thoughts and feelings with your spouse. Also encourage your mate to share his or her joys and concerns.

Do not nurture bitterness. Work to overcome it. (Ephesians 4:32) You may find it helpful to meditate on God's own example. He was deeply hurt when his worshippers in ancient Israel turned away from him. Jehovah God even likened himself to a betrayed marriage mate. (Jeremiah 3:8, 9; 9:2) But he did not "stay resentful to time indefinite." (Jeremiah 3:12) When his people returned to him in genuine repentance, he forgave them.



Eventually, when both of you are satisfied that the necessary changes in your relationship have been made, you will gain a sense of security. Then, instead of giving constant attention to merely saving your marriage, you can focus together on other goals. Even so, schedule regular periods of time to evaluate your progress. Do not become complacent. Deal with minor setbacks, and confirm your commitment to each other.—Galatians 6:9.

TRY THIS: Instead of trying to get your marriage back to the way it was, think of yourselves as building a new and stronger relationship.

You Can Succeed

In times of uncertainty, remember this: God is the Originator of the marriage arrangement. (Matthew 19:4-6) Therefore, with his help, you can make your marriage succeed. All the couples mentioned above applied the Bible's wise counsel and were able to save their marriage.

It has now been more than 20 years since the crisis in Steve and Jodi's relationship.

Steve sums up their road to recovery this way: "It was after beginning to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses that we made the most significant improvement. The help we gained was invaluable. As a result, we made it through those tough times." Jodi says: "I feel richly blessed that we were able to endure through that terrible time. By studying the Bible together, and with a lot of hard work, we now have a wonderful marriage."

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- *What were my reasons for deciding to preserve my marriage despite past infidelity?*
- *What positive qualities can I see in my mate right now?*
- *How did I show love in little ways when my mate and I were courting, and how can I do that again?*



LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

What Is the Good News About Religion?

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

1. Is all religion good?

Many religious groups include sincere people who want to please God. He sees those people and cares about them. Sadly, though, some people have used religion for evil purposes. In the past, religious leaders have even tortured their opponents. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4; 11:13-15) Today, according to news reports, some religious leaders have encouraged terrorism or supported war, or they have been involved in child abuse.—*Read Matthew 24:3-5, 11, 12.*

The Bible teaches that there are two types of religion—true religion and false religion. False religion does not teach the truth about God. Nevertheless, Jehovah God wants people to know the truth about him.—*Read 1 Timothy 2:3-5.*



The Complete Encyclopedia of Illustration/J. G. Heck



2. What is the good news about religion?

God does not want people to be deceived by religions that claim to love him but misrepresent him. In fact, adherents of those religions love being friends with the world that is controlled by Satan the Devil. (James 4:4; 1 John 5:19) God's Word describes religions that give their allegiance to human governments rather than to God as being like a prostitute. The Bible calls this harlot by the name "Babylon the Great," after the ancient city where false religion began after the Flood of Noah's day. Soon, God will bring a sudden end to religion that deceives and oppresses mankind.—*Read Revelation 17:1, 2, 5, 17; 18:8, 23, 24.*

3. How will God bring joy to every land?

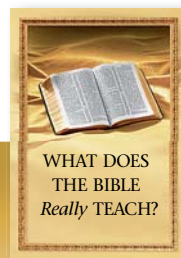
The coming judgment on false religion is good news. It will bring worldwide relief from oppression. Never again will false religions mislead and divide mankind. Everyone living will be united in worship of the only true God.—*Read Isaiah 11:9; Revelation 18:20, 21; 21:3, 4.*



4. What should sincere people do?

Jehovah has not forgotten the sincere people who are scattered among false religions worldwide. He is now gathering such people into unity by teaching them the truth.—*Read Micah 4:2, 5.*

Jehovah welcomes into his family those who want to serve him. Even if our friends and relatives are upset when we start to serve Jehovah, we gain much. We gain friendship with God, a new and loving “family,” and the prospect of having everlasting life.—*Read Mark 10:29, 30; 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.*



For more information, see chapters 15 and 16 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

WHAT did a man from Scotland find to be more rewarding than a successful business career? What helped a man in Brazil to put away an immoral lifestyle and quit smoking crack cocaine? How was a man in Slovenia able to give up his habit of binge drinking? Read what these people have to say.



“My life seemed good.” —JOHN RICKETTS

YEAR BORN: 1958

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SCOTLAND

HISTORY: SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN



MY PAST: I enjoyed a comfortable upbringing. My father was an officer in the British army, so our family moved a lot. Besides Scotland, we lived in England, Germany, Kenya, Malaysia, Ireland, and Cyprus. From the age of eight, I attended boarding schools in Scotland. I eventually graduated from Cambridge University.

At the age of 20, I began an eight-year career in the oil business. At first, I did this work in South America, then later in Africa, and finally in Western Australia. After moving to Australia, I set up an investment firm, which I eventually sold.

The proceeds from that sale enabled me to retire at the age of 40. I used my newfound time to travel. I motorcycled around

Australia twice, and I made a trip around the world. My life seemed good.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED

MY LIFE: Even before retiring, I wanted to find some way to thank God for the life I was enjoying. I started going to the Anglican Church, in which I had been raised. But the church didn't provide much instruction from the Bible. Next, I studied with the Mormons, but I was dissuaded by their lack of reliance on the Bible.

One day, Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on my door. I could see immediately that they base their teachings squarely on the Bible. One scripture they shared with me was 1 Timothy 2:3, 4. Those verses say that it is God's will that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." I was impressed that the Witnesses emphasized not just knowledge but *accurate* knowledge based on the Bible.

Studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses helped me to acquire such accurate knowledge. For example, I learned that God and Jesus are not part of some mysterious Trinity; rather, they are two distinct individuals.

(John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 11:3) I was delighted to learn that simple truth. I was also annoyed that I had wasted so much effort in the past trying to comprehend the incomprehensible!

I soon began attending meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. I was impressed by the friendliness and moral fiber of everyone there—they seemed like saints. Their genuine love convinced me that I had found the true religion.—John 13:35.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: After I was baptized, I met a wonderful woman named Diane. She had been raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and she had many fine qualities that I found attractive. In time, we

were married. Diane's friendship and support have been a true blessing from Jehovah.

Diane and I developed a strong desire to move to an area where there was a greater need for preachers of the Bible's good news. In 2010, we moved to Belize, Central America. Here we minister to people who have a love for God and a real thirst for Bible knowledge.

It brings me peace of mind finally to know the truth about God and his Word, the Bible. As a full-time minister, I have had the joy of teaching the Bible to a number of others. There is nothing better than watching Bible truth improve someone's life—just as it did mine. At last, I have found the best way to thank God for the life I enjoy.



“They were very kind to me.”

—MAURÍCIO ARAÚJO

YEAR BORN: 1967

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BRAZIL
HISTORY: IMMORAL LIFESTYLE

MY PAST: I grew up in Avaré, a quiet little town in the state of São Paulo. Its residents are mainly of the working class.

My father died while my mother was expecting me. As a young boy, I dressed in my mother's clothes while she was out. I adopted feminine mannerisms, and people started to



view me as gay. In time, I began having sex with other boys and men.

By the time I reached my late teens, I was actively seeking sexual partners (both male and female) wherever I could find them—in bars, nightclubs, and even churches. At carnival time, I would dress as a woman and dance in samba-school parades. I was very popular.

Among my friends were gays, prostitutes, and drug addicts. Some of them influenced me to try crack cocaine, and soon I was hooked. Some-

times we smoked all night long. At other times, I would isolate myself and spend the entire day smoking crack. I became so emaciated that a rumor went around that I had AIDS.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:

About this time, I came in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses. They were very kind to me. One of the Bible verses they read to me was Romans 10:13, which says: "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved." Those words impressed on me the importance of using Jehovah's name. Many times, after having smoked crack cocaine all night long, I would open the window, look up to heaven, and pray to Jehovah in tears, begging him to help me.

Worried about my anguished mother, who suffered deeply as she watched me destroy myself with drugs, I made up my mind to stop taking them. Soon after that, I accepted the Witnesses' offer of a Bible study. They assured me that the study would strengthen my resolve to quit drugs—and it did!

As I continued studying the Bible, I realized that I needed to change my lifestyle. It was especially difficult to abandon my homosexual practices, as these had been a part of me for as long as I could remember. One thing that helped, though, was changing my envi-

ronment. I ended my old friendships and stopped going to bars and nightclubs.

Although it was not easy to make these changes, I found comfort in learning that Jehovah cared for me and that he understood my struggle. (1 John 3:19, 20) By 2002, I had stopped all homosexual practices, and in that year I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: My mother was so impressed by the changes I made that she also began studying the Bible. Unfortunately, she has since suffered a stroke. Nevertheless, she has continued to develop love for Jehovah and for Bible truth.

For the past eight years, I've been engaged in the full-time ministry, spending most of my time teaching the Bible to others. I must admit that I have had to fight improper desires at times. But I take courage in knowing that by choosing not to act on those desires, I can be pleasing to Jehovah.

Drawing close to Jehovah and living in a way that pleases him has boosted my self-respect. Today, I am a happy man.

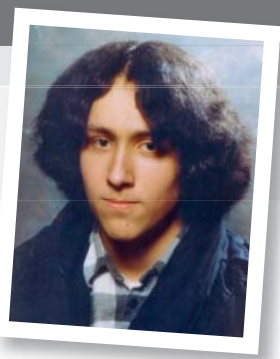


"I was a bottomless barrel." —LUKA ŠUC

YEAR BORN: 1975

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SLOVENIA

HISTORY: BINGE DRINKER



MY PAST: I was born in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. I had a pleasant childhood until the age of four. Then my father committed suicide. After this tragedy, my mother had to work hard to put bread on the table for two growing boys, my older brother and me.

At the age of 15, I moved in with my grandmother. I enjoyed living with her, as many of my friends lived in her

neighborhood. I also had greater freedom than I did when living at home. At the age of 16, I started associating with people who went drinking on the weekends. I let my hair grow long, started dressing rebelliously, and later took up smoking.

Although I experimented with various drugs, I stuck with drinking, as I found it to be the most enjoyable. Soon I had gone from drinking a few glasses of wine to more than a bottle at a time. I became an expert at hiding just how drunk I really was. Often, it was only the smell of alcohol on my breath that indicated I had been drinking. Even then, no one had any idea that I had perhaps downed several liters of wine or beer—and mixed with vodka at that!

Many times, I was the one who helped my friends stay on their feet after a night at the disco, even though, in all likelihood, I had consumed twice as much alcohol as they had. One day, I overheard one of my friends say that I was a bottomless barrel—a derogatory expression in Slovenian for someone who can outdrink others. That comment really hurt me.

I started to think about what I was doing with my life. I was overcome by feelings of worthlessness. It seemed that nothing I did in life had any meaning.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:

About this time, I noticed that one of my classmates had changed; his disposition had become milder. Curious about his transformation, I invited him out to a café. During our conversation, he explained that he had begun to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. He shared some of the things he was

learning, all of which were completely new to me, as I had not had any kind of religious upbringing. I began attending meetings of the Witnesses and studying the Bible with them.

Studying the Bible opened my eyes to many powerful, motivating truths. For example, I learned that we are living in what the Bible calls "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) I also learned that God will soon remove bad people from the earth and grant good people the opportunity to enjoy everlasting life in Paradise. (Psalm 37:29) I felt a strong desire to clean up my life so that I could be among those good people.

I began telling my friends about the Bible truths that I was learning. Most ridiculed me for what I shared with them, but this turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Their reaction helped me to see that they were not true friends. I came to realize that my drinking problem was closely related to my choice of associates. All week long, they looked forward to the weekend so that they could get drunk again.

I broke off those friendships and replaced them with upbuilding association with Jehovah's Witnesses. Being in their company was a source of great encouragement—these were people who sincerely loved God and who really tried to live by his standards. Gradually, I was able to give up my habit of binge drinking.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I'm grateful to Jehovah that I no longer need alcohol to feel happy. I really don't know where I would have ended up had I continued in my former ways. But I am convinced that my life is better now.

For the past seven years, I have been privileged to serve at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Slovenia. Knowing Jehovah and serving him has given my life true meaning.



OUR READERS ASK . . .

Did the first-century Christians participate in politics?

■ Before his ascension to heaven, Jesus gave his disciples clear instructions on how to carry out their ministry, but he did not include any political advice. (Matthew 28:18-20) Hence, his disciples continued to live by the formula that Jesus had provided earlier: “Pay back Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God.”—Mark 12:17.

How did that formula help Jesus’ followers to live in the world but be no part of it? Where did they draw the line as to what things belong to the State, or Caesar, and what things to God?

The apostle Paul viewed participating in politics as stepping across the line. “Paul was willing to use his Roman citizenship to demand the protections of the judicial process due him, but he engaged in no lobbying on the public policy issues of the day,” states the book *Beyond Good Intentions—A Biblical View of Politics*.

What guidelines did Paul give to fellow Christians? The same book adds: “His letters to believers in such important cities as Corinth, Ephesus, and even Rome betrayed no interest in secular political squabbles.” The book also notes that Paul “commanded submission to government, but in none of his many letters did he ever detail even one policy for the local

church to urge on public institutions.”—Romans 12:18; 13:1, 5-7.

Christians living decades after the death of Paul kept firmly in place the same division between their obligations to God and to the State. They remained respectful toward political powers but refrained from political activities. *Beyond Good Intentions* states about those believers: “Though they believed they were obligated to honor the governing authorities, the early Christians did not believe in participating in political affairs.”

Some 300 years after the death of Christ, however, things changed. Theologian Charles Villa-Vicencio says: “When the political structures were changed under Constantine, Christians apparently flocked to participate in the civil service and the army and to accept political office.” (*Between Christ and Caesar*) What was the result? At the end of the fourth century C.E., that blend of religion and politics had become the State religion of the Roman Empire.

Today, many religions that claim to follow Christ continue to encourage their members to participate in politics. Those religions, however, are not imitating Christ, nor are they following the example of the first-century Christians.





DID YOU KNOW?

What was the “judgment seat” to which the apostle Paul was led?



■ The account at Acts 18:12, 13 states that Jews in Corinth accused Paul of proselytizing illegally and that they led him to “the judgment seat,” or *be'ma* (a Greek word meaning “step”). Ancient Corinth had an elevated outdoor platform, or stand, near the center of the agora, or marketplace, which may have been just a few steps from the synagogue. The position of this stand allowed it to be used to address the populace. Built of blue and white marble and lavishly decorated with delicate carvings, the speakers’ stand was furnished with two waiting rooms that had marble benches and mosaic floors.

That speakers’ stand seems to be the judgment seat where the apostle Paul stood before the proconsul Gallio, Ro-

man governor of Achaia. From this spot, seated officials would hear cases and announce their judicial decisions to the assembled crowd.

In Greek city states, it was normal for the assembly to meet in front of such a *be'ma*, from which all civic business was conducted. In their accounts of Jesus’ trial, the Greek texts of both Matthew 27:19 and John 19:13 refer to Pontius Pilate’s addressing the crowd from his *be'ma*.—Acts 12:21.

Why were some Jews stumbled by the manner of Jesus’ death?



■ The apostle Paul stated regarding the early Christians: “We preach Christ impaled, to the Jews a cause for stumbling but to the nations foolishness.” (1 Corinthians 1:23) Why would the manner in which Jesus died cause some to stumble?

Regarding Jesus’ manner of death and the culture of those living in the Middle East in the first century, Bible commentator Ben Witherington III says that it was “the most shameful way to die in that world. It was not seen as a noble martyrdom of any sort.” Witherington further states: “People in that world believed that the manner of your

death most revealed your character. On that basis, Jesus was a scoundrel, a man who committed treason against the state, a man who deserved the punishment used for slave revolts.” Given that cultural background, it does not seem reasonable to claim that the early Christians fabricated the accounts about Jesus’ death and resurrection.



My Bible Lessons

See the **animals**
near Noah's ark.

Which ones **moo**,
and which ones **bark**?





Every animal,
short and tall,

Noah's ark
saved them all.
Genesis 7:7-10; 8:15-17

ACTIVITIES

Have your child point to:

Ark	Bear	Dog
Elephant	Giraffe	Lion
Monkey	Pig	Sheep
Zebra	Rainbow	Tree

Try to imitate the sounds of:

Dog	Lion	Monkey
Pig	Sheep	

You Can Choose a Successful Future

HOW?

HOW can you achieve a life that is truly successful? One way is to use the remarkable ability you have to consider the possible long-term consequences of decisions you make now.

Admittedly, you may find it difficult to make decisions that promote your lasting welfare. Why? Because so many around us subscribe to get-it-now thinking. You may realize, for example, that applying Bible counsel can help you to build strong family relationships. (Ephesians 5:22–6:4) But to do so, you must regularly invest time in your family, while resisting pressure to become overly absorbed in work, recreation, or entertainment. As in so many areas of life, you must choose between short-term gratification and long-term success. How can you find the strength needed to choose a wise course? Take the following four steps.

1 Envision the Outcome of Your Decisions

When facing a decision, envision the results as realistically as possible. The Bible advises: “Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself.” (Proverbs 22:3) If you take an honest look at the consequences, you will likely feel motivated to avoid a course that is potentially harmful. On the other hand, when you visualize the long-term benefits of a wise decision, you can strengthen your resolve to act.



Ask yourself: ‘What will be the outcome of my decision in a year, or even 10 or 20 years from now? What will be the effect on my emotional and physical health? How will my choice affect my family and others whom I care about?’ Most important, ask: ‘Will my decision be pleasing to God? How will it affect my friendship with him?’ Since the Bible is inspired by God, it can help you discern what is pleasing to him and alert you to pitfalls that you might otherwise overlook. —Proverbs 14:12; 2 Timothy 3:16.

2 Examine the Options for Yourself

Rather than making their own decisions, many simply imitate the people around them. But a particular way of life will not lead to success just because it is popular. Examine the options for yourself. Take, for example, Natalie.* She explains: “I wanted a good marriage. But I could see that I was not going to get one the way that I was living. In college all my friends were very intelligent young people. Yet, they continually made bad decisions in their personal lives. They were constantly changing boyfriends or girlfriends. Like them, I had several boyfriends. This way of life brought me a lot of emotional pain.”

Natalie began to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. “Among the Witnesses,” she says,

* Names in this article have been changed.



"I saw happy young people and strong marriages. Although it was not easy for me, I gradually changed my values and lifestyle." What was the result? "I always wanted to marry someone whom I deeply admired," says Natalie. "In time, I married a man who shares my religious convictions. I feel that God has given me a family life better than I could have ever dreamed of."

3 Take a Long-Range View

To resist short-term thinking, you also need a clear vision of the future you want and a plan for how to achieve it. (Proverbs 21:5) Do not limit your thinking to the 70 or 80 years of a typical human life span. Instead, visualize yourself enjoying the everlasting future that the Bible describes.



The Bible explains that by means of the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus, God has made provision for humans to gain everlasting life. (Matthew 20:28; Romans 6:23) God promises that soon his original purpose for mankind and the earth will be fulfilled. Those who love God will have the opportunity to enjoy life forever in a beautifully restored earth. (Psalm 37:11; Revelation 21:3-5) That future can be yours if you take a long-range view.

4 Work to Reach Your Goals

How can you reach out for that promised future? Start by taking in knowledge of God. (John 17:3) Accurate Bible knowledge will build your confidence that God's promises for the future will be a reality. Such faith can strengthen you to make any changes needed to gain God's approval.

Consider Michael's experience. He relates: "I began abusing alcohol and drugs when I

was 12. I belonged to a gang and expected to die before I was 30. My anger and frustration led to multiple attempts at suicide. I was hoping that there was more to life, but I just couldn't find it." While Michael was in high school, a fellow gang member began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Michael agreed to do the same.



What Michael learned from the Bible changed how he envisioned his future. "I learned that in the future the earth will be restored to a paradise and that people will live in peace, free from anxiety. I began to see this as my future. Building a good friendship with Jehovah became my goal. Yet, I had ups and downs. Even after I started studying the Bible, I got drunk a few times. And I got involved with a girl."

How was Michael able to overcome setbacks and successfully change his life course? He says: "My Bible teacher encouraged me to read the Bible daily and to associate with others who wanted to please God. I realized that my gang associates were still influencing me. Although they had been like family to me, I broke those ties."

Michael established short-term goals and priorities that helped him to reach his larger goal of harmonizing his life with God's standards. You can do the same. Write down both your long-term objective and the intermediate steps that will help you to reach it. Share your goals with those who will support you, and invite them to help you monitor your progress.

Do not postpone learning about God and applying his direction in your life. Take steps now to build your love for God and his Word, the Bible. Describing a person who applies Bible principles, God's Word says: "Everything he does will succeed."—Psalm 1:1-3.

The Farmer

"[Jesus] said to his disciples: 'Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.'"

—MATTHEW 9:37, 38.

JESUS often used farming methods and farm equipment to illustrate important teachings. (Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 4:3-9; Luke 13:6-9) Why? Because he lived in an agricultural society. Many who listened to him followed farming traditions that had remained unchanged for centuries. They appreciated his references to their daily activities. He could relate to them, and they were moved by what he taught.—Matthew 7:28.

We can deepen our appreciation for Jesus' illustrations and for other Bible accounts if

we know a little about the first-century farmer—the crops he planted, the tools he used, the challenges he faced.

Watch as a farmer goes about his work. Read the cited scriptures, and see what you learn.

A Time to Sow

Shielding his eyes from the sun's first rays, the farmer stands in his doorway and sniffs the moist air. Rains have softened the sun-baked soil. Plowing time has come. He hoists a light wooden plow to his shoulder and heads for his field.

There, the farmer gathers his oxen, yokes them together, and goads them into action.



The plow's iron tip bites the stony ground. It does not turn the earth but only scratches it, digging a shallow trench, or furrow (1). Stumbling left and right, the farmer struggles to keep the furrows straight—he never looks behind, or the plow would wander off track. (Luke 9:62) He needs to stay within his boundary markers and make the best use of his small plot of land.

The field, now combed with furrows, is ready for sowing. Carrying a bag of barley in one hand, the farmer sweeps the other hand left and right, scattering the precious seed (2). Hard-packed foot paths cut through his field, so he takes great care that the seed lands on "the good soil."—Luke 8:5, 8.

After sowing comes harrowing. The farmer hitches thorn branches to his oxen and drags the branches across the field. Flocks of birds squawk and peck, stealing seed before dirt covers it. Later, the farmer uses a mattock

(3) to loosen the earth and remove weeds that could choke his seedlings before they mature.—Matthew 13:7.

A Time to Reap

Months pass. Rain falls. Heads of ripe barley now sway in the sun, making the fields look white.—John 4:35.

Harvest is a busy time for the farmer and his family. A reaper grabs the stalks of grain with his left hand and swings an iron sickle with his right (4). Others gather the grain, bind it into sheaves (5), and load it onto the donkeys or carts (6) that will take it to the village threshing floor.

The sun burns a white hole in the center of a clear blue sky. The family briefly rest in the shade of a fig tree. They laugh and talk and share their quick meal of bread, parched grain, olives, dried figs, and raisins. They finish with rapid gulps of springwater.—Deuteronomy 8:7.

In a nearby field, gleaners gather leftover grain (7). Some are poor and do not own land.—Deuteronomy 24:19-21.



Later, at the village threshing floor, the farmer spreads the sheaves on an elevated, hard-packed floor. Oxen pull a heavy sledge round and round (8). (Deuteronomy 25:4) Sharp stones and metal pieces embedded in the undersurface of the sledge slice the stalks.

The farmer waits for the evening breeze to come up. (Ruth 3:2) In the twilight, he slides a pronged wooden fork, or “winnowing shovel” (9), under the threshed sheaves and hurls the load into the air. (Matthew 3:

12) The heavy grain falls to the floor—the lighter chaff wafts away. Over and over he hoists his fork until he winnows all the grain.

At sunrise, the farmer’s wife and daughters begin sifting (10). They shake sieves full of grain and grit. The barley falls into baskets, while the rubbish is tossed aside. There has been a bumper crop. Workers store some surplus grain in jars (11). The rest will be poured into storage pits.

Atop the threshing floor, the farmer straightens his back, stretches his tired muscles, and surveys the fields that surround the village. He views with satisfaction the parchment-colored plots, covered in stubble—evidence of days of backbreaking labor. He watches workers tend vineyards and groves of olive, pomegranate, and fig trees. Nearby, a neighbor waves a greeting as he digs in a small garden plot. The ground will yield cucumbers, lentils, beans, leeks, chickpeas, and onions. The farmer pauses, raises his eyes heavenward, and offers a brief, heartfelt prayer, thanking God for the good gifts that He gives.
—Psalm 65:9-11.





The Rewarder of All Who Serve Him

“THANK YOU.” Who does not enjoy hearing words of gratitude for a job well done or a gift given from the heart? We all want to feel that our efforts are appreciated, especially by those we love. Of course, we love our God, Jehovah, above all. Does he value our efforts to serve him? Let us examine his dealings with Ebed-melech, a man who risked his life to save one of God’s prophets.—*Read Jeremiah 38:7-13 and 39:16-18.*

Who was Ebed-melech? Evidently he was an officer in the court of King Zedekiah of Judah.* Ebed-melech was a contemporary of Jeremiah, whom God sent to warn unfaithful Judah of its coming destruction. Though surrounded by godless princes, Ebed-melech was God-fearing and had great respect for Jeremiah. Ebed-melech’s godly qualities were put to the test when evil princes falsely accused Jeremiah of sedition and threw him into a miry cistern, leaving him to die. (Jeremiah 38:4-6) What would Ebed-melech do?

Ebed-melech acted bravely and decisively, pushing aside any fear of reprisal from the princes. He publicly approached Zedekiah and protested the unjust treatment of Jeremiah. Perhaps pointing at the perpetrators, he told the king: “These men have done bad . . . to Jeremiah.” (Jeremiah 38:9) Ebed-melech prevailed and, at Zedekiah’s direction, took 30 men to go and rescue Jeremiah.

Ebed-melech now showed another desirable trait: kindness. He took “worn-out rags and worn-out pieces of cloth and let them down to Jeremiah . . . by means of the ropes.” Why the

rags and cloth? So that Jeremiah could cushion his armpits, easing any chafing as he was being pulled up from the muddy deep.—Jeremiah 38:11-13.

Jehovah saw what Ebed-melech did. Did He appreciate it? Through Jeremiah, God told Ebed-melech that Judah’s destruction was imminent. Then God gave Ebed-melech what one scholar calls “a quintuple guarantee of salvation.” Jehovah said: “I will deliver you . . . You will not be given into the hand of the men . . . I shall without fail furnish you an escape . . . By the sword you will not fall . . . You will certainly come to have your soul as a spoil.” Why did Jehovah promise to keep Ebed-melech safe? Jehovah told him: “Because you have trusted in me.” (Jeremiah 39:16-18) Jehovah knew that Ebed-melech had acted not only because of his concern for Jeremiah but also because of his trust and faith in God.

The lesson is clear: Jehovah appreciates what we do in serving him. The Bible assures us that he remembers even the smallest act of worship motivated by a heart full of faith. (Mark 12:41-44) Are you moved to draw closer to this appreciative God? If so, you can be sure that he will live up to what his own Word calls him: “The rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.”—Hebrews 11:6.



* Ebed-melech is called “a eunuch.” (Jeremiah 38:7) Although this term literally referred to a male who had been castrated, it was also used in a broader sense to refer to any official assigned duties in the court of the king.

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR MAY:

■ **Jeremiah 32-50**



“SAFEGUARD YOUR HEART!”

DISTRICT CONVENTION OF JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

FRIDAY’S THEME

“As for Jehovah, He Sees What the Heart Is”

—1 SAMUEL 16:7.

SATURDAY’S THEME

“Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth Speaks”

—MATTHEW 12:34.

SUNDAY’S THEME

“Serve Jehovah With a Complete Heart”

—1 CHRONICLES 28:9.

The Bible mentions the heart nearly a thousand times. On most occasions, the Scriptures speak, not of the literal human heart, but of the figurative heart. What is the figurative heart? The term can refer to the inner self—what a person thinks, feels, and desires.

Why should we safeguard our figurative heart? God moved King Solomon to write: “More than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart, for out of it are the sources of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) The quality of our life now and our prospects for future life depend on the condition of our figurative heart. Why? Because God sees what is in our heart. (1 Sam-

uel 16:7) It is the kind of person we are inside, in the “secret person of the heart,” that determines how God feels about us.—1 Peter 3:4.

How can we safeguard our heart? The answer to that question will be discussed in depth during the conventions that Jehovah’s Witnesses will be holding around the world beginning this month. You are warmly invited to attend all three days of this convention.* What you learn will help you to act in a way that makes Jehovah God’s heart rejoice.—Proverbs 27:11.

* To find a convention near you, please visit the Web site www.jw.org. You may also contact Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area or write to the publishers of this magazine.

Photo on right: Aus dem Fundus der MÜNCHNER OLYMPIAPARK GMBH, München

Would you welcome a visit?

Even in this troubled world, you can gain happiness from accurate Bible knowledge of God, his Kingdom, and his wonderful purpose for mankind. If you would welcome further information or would like to have someone visit you to conduct a free Bible study, please write to Jehovah’s Witnesses at the appropriate address listed on page 4.