

What Would You Like to Ask God?



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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SOME say that it is wrong to question God. They may feel that it is disrespectful to ask why God does or does not allow certain things to happen. Is that your view?

If so, you may be surprised to learn that many good people have questioned God. Note the following examples of questions they have asked him:

The faithful man Job: "Why is it that the wicked themselves keep living, have grown old, also have become superior in wealth?"-Job 21:7.

The loyal prophet Habakkuk: "Why is it that you look on those dealing treacherously, that you keep silent when someone wicked swallows up someone more righteous than he is?"-Habakkuk 1:13.

Jesus Christ: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—Matthew 27:46.

If you read the passages surrounding those quotations, you will see no indication that Jehovah* God was offended when asked such sincere questions. Really, his tolerance is not surprising. For instance, God is not insulted when we ask him to satisfy basic physical needs that keep our bodies healthy. He gladly fills those requests. (Matthew 6:11, 33) Likewise, he willingly supplies information that can keep us mentally and emotionally healthy. (Philippians 4:6, 7) In fact, Jesus told his disciples: "Keep on asking, and it will be given you." (Matthew 7:7) The context of Jesus' promise shows that he was talking about receiving not only material things but also answers to important questions.

If you had the opportunity, which of the following questions would you like to ask God?

- Does my life have a purpose?
- What will happen when I die?
- Why do you allow me to suffer?

Since "all Scripture is inspired of God," you will find the answers God gives in his Word, the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16) Consider both what has prompted some to ask the questions listed above and the answers that the Bible provides.

^{*} Jehovah is the name of God as revealed in the Bible.

QUESTION 1:

Does My Life Have a Purpose?



ROSALIND, who grew up in England, had an insatiable desire for knowledge. She also wanted to help people. After graduating from school, she got a prestigious job that involved assisting the homeless, and she also helped those with physical and learning disabilities. Despite having satisfying work and being comfortable materially, she says, "For years I wondered, 'Why are we here?' and 'What is the purpose of life?'"

Why ask the question? Humans are not like unreasoning animals. We have a capacity to learn from the past, to plan for the future, and to look for a purpose in our life.

What do some say the answer is? Many feel that the primary purpose of life is to gain wealth or fame and thus achieve happiness.

What does that answer imply? We set our own priorities in life. God's will is less important than our desires.

What does the Bible teach? King Solomon gathered enormous wealth and pursued pleasure but found that those things brought no lasting sense of purpose. He identified what brought real purpose in life when he wrote: "The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) What does keeping God's commandments involve?

Part of God's purpose for us is that we enjoy life. Solomon wrote: "With a man there is nothing better than that he should eat and

THE WATCHTOWER

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God also wants us to love and care for our family. Note the simple, practical guidance given to each family member.

"Husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies."—Ephesians 5:28.

"The wife should have deep respect for her husband."—Ephesians 5:33.

"Children, be obedient to your parents." —Ephesians 6:1.

If we apply those Bible principles, we will find a measure of happiness and contentment. However, the most important thing we can do is learn all we can about our Creator and draw close to him as our Friend. In fact, the Bible invites us to "draw close to God." It then makes this remarkable promise: "He will draw close to you." (James 4:8) If you accept this invitation, your life will take on real purpose.

Rosalind, quoted earlier, now feels that she has discovered the purpose of life. On page 10 of this magazine, you can read what she says led her to that change in attitude.

To find out more about how you can live in a way that pleases God, see chapter 12 of the book What Does the Bible Really Teach? Available for download at

www.jw.org

What Did Jesus Say About the Purpose of Life?

Jesus had no doubt about the purpose of his life. He said: "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." (John 18: 37) Jesus spent his life teaching people the truth about God and His purposes.

Our life will take on real meaning if we follow Jesus' example. In fact, Jesus invites us to learn from him. (Matthew 11:29) Consider just two ways in which we can do so.

Jesus taught that for us to be happy, we must be "conscious of [our] spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) We can satisfy our spiritual need if we take in knowledge of "the only true God, and of the one whom [he] sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

Jesus commanded his followers to teach others about what they had learned. He said: "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.

Those who satisfy their spiritual need by studying the Bible and applying what they learn find that their life changes for the better. They gain the conviction that their life has real purpose when they start helping others learn about God.

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QUESTION 2:

What Will Happen When I Die?



ROMAN was a young boy when a close friend of his was killed in a car accident. "The loss of my friend shook me up terribly," he says. "For years after the accident, I wondered what happens to us when we die."

Why ask the question? Human death seems unnatural. No matter what age we are, we usually do not want to die. Many fear what comes after death.

What do some say the answer is? Many believe that at death some part of the person lives on. They believe that good people will be rewarded in heaven, while those who were bad will be punished eternally for their sins. Others think that at death a person ceases to exist and eventually is completely forgotten.

What do those answers imply? The first answer assumes that at death a person does not really die. The second implies that life is pointless. Those who hold to this latter view may adopt the fatalistic attitude: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die." —1 Corinthians 15:32.

What does the Bible teach? The Bible does *not* teach that at death some part of a person lives on. God inspired King Solomon to write: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) Those who are "conscious of nothing" are totally unaware of their surroundings. They cannot feel or act. So the dead cannot help or harm the living.

Contrary to what many believe, God did not purpose for humans to die. He created the first human, Adam, with the prospect of living forever on earth. The only time that God mentioned death was when he told Adam of the punishment for disobedience. He restricted Adam from eating the fruit of a certain tree and then warned him that if he

ate from it, he would "positively die." (Genesis 2:17) If Adam and Eve had remained obedient, they and all their descendants who were loyal to God would have lived forever on earth.

Adam chose to ignore God's warning. He sinned when he disobeyed God, so he died. (Romans 6:23) No part of Adam survived his death. Rather, at death Adam ceased to exist. God said to Adam: "In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) Because all mankind descended from Adam, we inherited sin and death from him. —Romans 5:12.

Despite Adam's poor choice, God will fulfill His purpose to populate the earth with Adam's descendants. (Genesis 1:28; Isaiah 55:11) Soon, Jehovah will bring back to life the majority of those who have died. Speaking of that time, the apostle Paul said: "There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous."—Acts 24:15.

Roman, quoted earlier, studied the Bible and learned what it teaches about death and about Jehovah God. What he discovered had a profound impact on him. Read his account on page 11 of this magazine.

To find out more about what happens at death, see chapter 6 of the book What Does the Bible Really Teach? Available for download at

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What Did Jesus Say About Death?

Jesus did not agree with the religious leaders of his day who said that there would be no resurrection of the dead. (Luke 20:27) Neither did he teach that some part of a person survives death. Rather, Jesus taught the following.

Death is like sleep. When his friend Lazarus died, Jesus said: "Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying there to awaken him from sleep." Jesus' disciples did not understand what he meant. They replied: "Lord, if he has gone to rest, he will get well." The Bible account explains: "Jesus had spoken, however, about his death. But they imagined he was speaking about taking rest in sleep. At that time, therefore, Jesus said to them outspokenly: 'Lazarus has died.'"—John 11:11-14.

The dead will be resurrected. When Jesus arrived at Lazarus' hometown, he consoled Martha, Lazarus' sister, by saying: "Your brother will rise." Jesus then made this profound promise: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life." Jesus' promise was not mere empty words. In front of many eyewitnesses, Jesus resurrected Lazarus, although he had been dead four days. —John 11:23, 25, 38-45.

In the revelation that he gave to the apostle John, Jesus again promised that the dead would be resurrected. He described a time in the future when death will release all who symbolically are held captive by it.—Revelation 20:13.

QUESTION 3:

Why Does God Allow Me to Suffer?



IAN's father was a heavy drinker. Although Ian grew up with what he needed materially, he lacked the emotional support that he longed to receive from his father. "I never had much affection for him, mostly because of his drinking and the way he treated my mother," says Ian. As Ian got older, he began to question God's existence. "'If God really exists,' I reasoned, 'why does he allow people to suffer?'"

Why ask the question? Even if your life is relatively problem free, your sense of justice might be outraged when you see innocent people suffer. However, the question about suffering becomes especially significant if you, like Ian, personally experience hardship or if a loved one gets sick or dies.

What do some say the answer is? Some believe that God permits suffering to teach us to be humble and compassionate. Others feel that people suffer in this life for sins committed in a past life.

What do those answers imply? God is unmoved by human suffering, making it difficult to love him. God is cruel.

What does the Bible teach? The Bible plainly states that God is *not* to blame for human suffering. "Let no man say when he is tested, I am tested by God; for it is not possible for God to be tested by evil, and he himself puts no man to such a test." (James 1:13, *The Bible in Basic English*) In fact, the idea that God is to blame for suffering is out of harmony with the way that the Bible describes God's personality. How so?

One of God's primary qualities is love. (1 John 4:8) To emphasize that point, the Bible portrays God as having feelings similar to those of a nursing mother. "Can a wife forget her suckling so that she should not pity the son of her belly?" asks God. "Even these women can forget, yet I myself shall not for-

get you." (Isaiah 49:15) Can you imagine a loving mother deliberately harming her child? A caring parent, on the contrary, would try to alleviate a child's suffering. Likewise, God does not cause innocent people to suffer.—Genesis 18:25.

Even so, innocent people are suffering. You may wonder, 'If God cares for us and is all powerful, why doesn't he get rid of the causes of suffering?'

God allows suffering to continue at present for good reasons. Consider just one: It is often *people* who cause suffering to others. Many bullies and tyrants who inflict pain are unwilling to change their ways. So for God to remove a major cause of suffering, he will have to destroy such people.

Explaining why God has not yet destroyed those who do wrong, the apostle Peter wrote: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Jehovah God's patience is an expression of his loving and merciful personality.

Soon, though, Jehovah God will act. He will "repay tribulation to those who make tribulation" for the innocent. Those who inflict unjust suffering will "undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction." —2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

Ian, quoted earlier, found satisfying answers to his questions about suffering. What he learned changed his outlook on life. Read his account on page 13 of this issue.

To find out more about why God allows suffering and what he will do about it, see chapter 11 of the book What Does the Bible Really Teach? Available for download at

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What Did Jesus Say About Suffering?

Jesus did not blame God for the suffering that surrounded him. Instead, he did the following.

Jesus showed that God does not punish innocent people by causing them to suffer.
Jesus cured the sick, the lame, and the blind.
(Matthew 15:30) The miracles that he performed teach us two significant facts: First,
Jesus used God's power to alleviate suffering, not to cause it. Second, Jesus did not
heal people dispassionately. When he saw
people suffering, he was "moved with pity"
for them. (Matthew 20:29-34) Jesus perfectly reflected his Father's feelings about suffering. Therefore, from Jesus' speech and actions, we learn that God is grieved by the
pain He sees and that He wants to relieve it.
—John 14:7, 9.

Jesus identified the real source of much human suffering—Satan the Devil. "That one," said Jesus, "was a manslayer when he began." (John 8:44) Jesus also identified Satan the Devil as "the ruler of this world" and the one who is "misleading the entire inhabited earth."—John 12:31; Revelation 12:9.

Jesus gave us hope of a time when all suffering will end. He taught his followers to pray: "Our Father in the heavens, . . . let your Kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6:9, 10) When God's Kingdom comes, there will be no more suffering on earth, just as there is no suffering in heaven.

In a revelation that he gave to the apostle John, Jesus described what life will be like for those living under God's Kingdom. At that time, God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 1:1; 21:3, 4.

THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

HOW did a young woman who had no interest in God and who was enjoying a promising career find real purpose in life? What did a young Catholic man learn about death that made him change the course of his life? And what did a young man who was disillusioned with life learn about God that moved him to become a Christian minister? Read what these people have to say.



YEAR BORN: 1963

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BRITAIN
HISTORY: ENJOYED
A PRESTIGIOUS CAREER

MY PAST: I was born in Croydon, South London, the sixth child of a family of nine. My parents were originally from the Caribbean island of St. Vincent. Mother attended a Methodist church. I had no interest in learning about God, although I had an insatiable desire for knowledge. My school vacations were often spent by the local lake, reading numerous books borrowed from the library.

Some years after leaving school, I realized that I wanted to help vulnerable people. I began working with the homeless and those who had physical and learning disabilities. Then I took a university course in health sciences. After graduating, I enjoyed a succession of surprisingly prestigious positions, and my lifestyle became increasingly luxurious. As a freelance management consul-

tant and social researcher, all I needed for work was my laptop computer and access to the Internet. I would fly abroad for a couple of weeks at a time, stay in my favorite hotel, enjoy the beautiful surroundings, and use the spa and gym facilities to keep fit. I really thought I was living. But I never lost my concern for the downtrodden.

MY LIFE: For years I wondered, 'Why are we here, and

what is the purpose of life?' But I never tried to find answers from the Bible. One day in 1999, my younger sister Margaret, who had become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, visited me with her Witness friend, who showed a personal interest in me. I found myself agreeing to have a Bible study with my sister's friend, but my progress was very slow, as my career and lifestyle took up much of my time.

In the summer of 2002, I moved to southwest England. There, I began a postgraduate university degree course in social research, with the ultimate goal of earning my doctorate. I started attending the local Kingdom Hall more regularly with my young son. Although I enjoyed higher education, my study of the Bible was bringing me a greater understanding of life's problems and the solution. I

realized the truth of Matthew 6:24, which says that you cannot serve two masters. It had to be either God or riches. I knew I would have to make a decision about my priorities in life.

The previous year, I had often attended a home Bible study group where the Witnesses studied the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?** I became convinced that only our Creator, Jehovah, has the solution to mankind's problems. Now, at the university I was being taught that the meaning of life did not involve belief in a Creator. I was incensed. After two months, I gave up my university course and decided to give more time to spiritual pursuits.

The Bible passage that motivated me to change my lifestyle was Proverbs 3:5, 6: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." Learning about our loving God was more rewarding than any material riches and status that a doctorate might bring. The more I learned about Jehovah's purpose for the earth and



the role Jesus played in sacrificing his life for us, the more I wanted to dedicate my life to our Creator. I was baptized in April 2003. After that I gradually simplified my life.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: My friendship with Jehovah is priceless. I've gained real inner peace and joy from knowing him. I also experience much happiness from associating with other true worshippers of God.

My thirst for knowledge continues to be amply satisfied by what I learn from the Bible and from Christian meetings. I enjoy sharing my faith with others. This has become my career, one in which I can really help people, both to experience a better life now and to have the wonderful hope of life in the new world. Since June 2008, I have been sharing in the full-time ministry, and I am happier and more contented than I have ever been. I have found the real purpose of life, and for that I am truly grateful to Jehovah.



YEAR BORN: 1973

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRIA

HISTORY: GAMBLER

MY PAST: I grew up in the small town of Braunau, Austria. The area was affluent, and crime was uncommon. My family was Catholic and raised me in that religion.

An event in my early life had a big impact on me. In 1984, when I was about 11 years old, I remember playing soccer with one of my close

^{*} Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

friends. That same afternoon, he was killed in a car accident. The loss of my friend shook me up terribly. For years after the accident, I wondered what happens to us when we die.

When I left school, I worked as an electrician. Although I became a habitual gambler and played for large sums of money, I had no financial problems. I also

spent a lot of time on sports and developed a love of heavy metal and punk rock music. Life was disco after disco and party after party. I was leading a pleasure-seeking, immoral life but felt very empty.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: In 1995, an elderly Witness knocked on my door and offered me a book that discussed the Bible's answer to the question, What happens at death? The tragic death of my young friend still troubled me, so I took the book. I read not only the chapter about death but the whole book!

What I read answered my questions about death. But I learned much more. Because I was raised as a Catholic, my faith centered first and foremost on Jesus. However, my careful study of the Bible helped me to develop a close friendship with Jesus' Father, Jehovah God. I was fascinated to learn that Jehovah is not secretive and aloof but makes himself clearly known to those who search for him. (Matthew 7:7-11) I learned that Jehovah has feelings. I also learned that he always keeps his word. That led me to take a deep interest in Bible prophecies and to investigate how they have been fulfilled. What I discovered strengthened my faith in God.

I soon realized that Jehovah's Witnesses were the only ones I knew of who were seriously interested in helping people understand the Bible. I noted the scriptures



mentioned in the Witness publications and looked them up in my Catholic Bible. The more I investigated, the more I realized that I had found the truth.

My Bible study taught me that Jehovah expected me to live by his standards. From what I read at Ephesians 4:22-24, I could see that I had to get rid of my "old personality," which was shaped by my "former course of conduct" and that I had to "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will." So I gave up my immoral lifestyle. I also saw the need to quit gambling, since that habit encourages materialism and greed. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) I knew that to make those changes, I would have to stop seeing my old friends and seek new associates who shared my standards.

Making those changes was not easy. But I started attending meetings with the Witnesses at the Kingdom Hall and began making new friends in the local congregation. I also continued a careful study of the Bible on my own. Those steps led me to change my taste in music, alter my goals in life, and tidy up my personal appearance. In 1995, I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I now have a balanced view of money and material possessions. I used to be hot-tempered, but now I have become more even-tempered. I am

also no longer overly anxious about the future.

I love being a part of an international group of people who serve Jehovah. Among them I see people who struggle with problems but still faithfully serve God. I feel so happy that I now expend all my time and energy, not on trying to satisfy my own desires, but on worshipping Jehovah and doing good for other people.



YEAR BORN: **1963**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: **ENGLAND** HISTORY: **DISILLUSIONED WITH LIFE**

MY PAST: I was born in England, but about the time I was seven years old, my family moved to Australia. We settled on the Gold Coast, a tourist destination in Queensland, Australia. Although my family was not rich, we always had what we needed.

Despite my comfortable upbringing, I was never really happy. I became quite disillusioned with life. My father was a heavy drinker. I never had much affection for him, mostly because of his drinking and the way he treated my mother. It was only later, when I learned about the things he had experienced as a soldier in Malaya, that I began to understand why he acted the way he did.

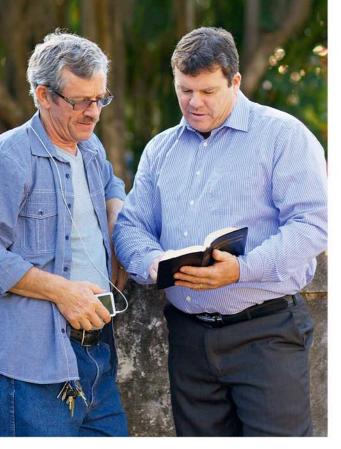
I started binge drinking during my highschool years. At age 16, I left school and joined the navy. I began to experiment with drugs and became addicted to tobacco. I also became more and more dependent on alcohol. I went from binge drinking on the weekends to doing so every day.

In my late teens and early 20's, I started to question God's existence. 'If God really exists,' I reasoned, 'why does he allow people to suffer and die?' I even wrote poetry blaming God for all the wick-

edness in the world.

I left the navy at age 23. After that, I worked at different jobs and even traveled overseas for a year, but nothing relieved my despondency. I had no desire to set goals or achieve anything. Nothing really appealed to me. The prospect of owning a house, having a secure job, and receiving promotions all seemed pointless. My only "comfort" came from drinking alcohol and listening to music.

I can recall the exact moment when I felt the greatest desire to find purpose in life. I was in Poland, visiting the infamous concentration camp at Auschwitz. I had read about the atrocities that took place. But when I actually stood there and saw the enormous size of the camp, my emotions were deeply



affected. I could not comprehend how humans could be so cruel to other humans. I remember walking around the camp with tears in my eyes, asking, 'Why?'

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: In 1993, after returning from overseas, I began to read the Bible in search of answers. Soon thereafter, two of Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on my door and invited me to a convention that was being held at a nearby stadium. I decided to go.

I had been to that stadium a few months earlier for a match, but the contrast with this convention was enormous. The Witnesses were polite and well-dressed, and their children were well-behaved. And I was stunned by what I saw at lunchtime. Hundreds of Witnesses ate lunch on the playing field, but when they returned to their seats, I couldn't

see a single piece of rubbish left on the field! Above all, these people seemed to have a feeling of contentment and peace—something I yearned for. I don't remember any of the talks that were given that day, but the conduct of the Witnesses made a lasting impression.

That evening, I thought of my cousin who read the Bible and studied different religions. Years earlier, he told me that Jesus said you would be able to recognize the true religion by its fruitage. (Matthew 7:15-20) I thought that I should at least look into what makes the Witnesses so different. For the first time in my life, I felt a bit of optimism and hope.

The following week, the two Witnesses who had invited me to the convention returned. They offered me a Bible study, which I accepted. I also began to attend Christian meetings with them.

As I studied the Bible, my view of God changed completely. I learned that he is not the cause of wickedness and suffering and that he himself is hurt when people do bad things. (Genesis 6:6; Psalm 78:40, 41) I became quite determined to try never to cause Jehovah any hurt. I wanted to make his heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) I stopped overdrinking and using tobacco, and I quit engaging in immorality. In March 1994, I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I am genuinely happy and content. I no longer turn to alcohol in an attempt to solve my problems. Instead, I've learned to throw my burdens on Jehovah.—Psalm 55:22.

For the past ten years, I have been married to a beautiful Witness named Karen, and I have a wonderful stepdaughter named Nella. The three of us enjoy spending a lot of our time in the Christian ministry, helping others to learn the truth about God. At last, my life has purpose.

DID YOU KNOW?



REED PENS FROM EGYPT, ABOUT THE FIRST CENTURY C.E.

© Image Asset Management/age fotostock

What kinds of pen and ink were used in Bible times?

■ At the conclusion of the third of his three letters included in the Bible, the apostle John states: "I had many things to write you, yet I do not wish to go on writing you with ink and pen." A literal translation of the original Greek words that John used indicates that he did not want to go on writing with "black [ink] and reed."-3 John 13, The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures.

The scribe's pen was a length of hard reed. It was cut diagonally across one end and finely slit through the point. A scribe could resharpen the point with a pumice stone. The reed resembled and functioned much like a modern fountain pen that has a metal nib.

Most ink, or "black," was a mixture of soot or lampblack and a rubbery gum, which served as an adhesive. This ink was sold dry and had to be mixed with water to the right consistency before being used. When applied, such ink simply dried on the surface of the papyrus or parchment and did not penetrate it. Hence, a writer could readily correct any errors using a wet sponge, which would also have been part of the scribe's standard equipment. This detail concerning ancient ink explains what Bible writers may have been thinking of when they spoke of names being wiped out of, or canceled from, God's book of remembrance.—Exodus 32:32. 33; Revelation 3:5, Kingdom Interlinear.

What kinds of tents did the apostle Paul make?



SEWING IMPLEMENTS FROM THE FIRST OR SECOND CENTURY C.E. Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

■ Acts 18:3 says that the apostle Paul was a tentmaker by trade. In Bible times, tentmakers wove camel or goat hair to produce strips of cloth. Then they sewed the strips together to make tents for travelers. Many tents in this period, however, were made from leather. Others were made from linen, which was manufactured in Paul's hometown of Tarsus. Paul may have worked with any or all of these materials. While working with Aquila, though, Paul may have made linen sun awnings that were used to cover the atria of private houses.

Paul likely learned this occupation in his youth. Evidence from Egyptian papyri indicates that during the period

of Roman occupation, apprentices in Egypt began learning a trade at about the age of 13. If Paul was that age when he began his trade, then by age 15 or 16, he may have mastered the arts of cutting his material to size and shape and then sewing it with various awls and stitching techniques. "At the conclusion of his apprenticeship Paul might have been given his own set of tools," says the book The Social Context of Paul's Ministry. "The requisite knives and awls," says the same work, "would have made tentmaking an easily portable trade," one that Paul could fall back on to support himself as a traveling missionary.



LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

Will God Provide a **World Government?**

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. Why does mankind need a world government?

Today, mankind's problems are often on a worldwide scale. In some nations, most people are poor and oppressed. In others, many people seem to have more than they need. Only a global administration could distribute the earth's resources fairly. -Read Ecclesiastes 4:1; 8:9.





2. Who could be trusted with a world government?

The idea of a world ruler is unpopular because no man or woman could do the job well. No human could gain the acceptance of everyone. Also, who is above being corrupted by power? The thought of a single tyrant ruling all mankind is terrifying.—Read Proverbs 29:2; Jeremiah 10:23.

Jehovah God has chosen his Son, Jesus, to rule mankind forever. (Luke 1:32, 33) Jesus has experience in living on earth. While here, he cured the sick, taught the meek, and spent time with children. (Mark 1:40-42; 6:34; 10:13-16) So Jesus is the ideal Ruler.—Read John 1:14.

3. Is a world government really feasible?

God has appointed his Son to rule the earth from heaven. (Daniel 7:13, 14) Just as a human ruler does not have to be present in every city he rules, Jesus does not need to be physically present on earth in order to rule mankind.—Read Matthew 8:5-9, 13.

Will everyone accept Jesus as Ruler? No. Only people who love what is good will accept him. Jehovah will clear the earth of those who reject the loving and righteous Ruler whom he has appointed.—Read Matthew 25:31-33, 46.

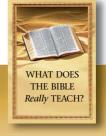




4. What will the world Ruler do?

As a shepherd gathers his sheep, Jesus is already gathering meek people from all nations and teaching them God's ways of love. (John 10:16; 13:34) Such people become eager supporters of Jesus and his kingship. (Psalm 72:8; Matthew 4:19, 20) Worldwide, Jesus' loyal subjects are unitedly announcing that Jesus has become King.—Read Matthew 24:14.

Jesus will soon act with power to relieve mankind of corrupt government. He has chosen some of his loyal followers to rule over the earth as kings with him in heaven. (Daniel 2:44; 7:27) Jesus' Kingdom will fill the earth with the knowledge of Jehovah and will establish the kind of paradise that was lost at the beginning of human history.—*Read Isaiah 11:* 3, 9; Matthew 19:28.





KEYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

Dealing With Debt

Giannis:* "My business collapsed during the Greek financial crisis, so we could no longer keep up with our mortgage and credit-card payments. I couldn't sleep because of the stress."

Katerina: "We had built our home with love, and I couldn't bear the thought of losing it. Giannis and I fought many times about how we would deal with our debt."

EBT can strain or even destroy a family. For example, researcher Jeffrey Dew found that couples in debt spend less time together, have more fights, and are less happy. Compared with other topics, arguments about debt and finances last longer, generate more yelling and hitting, and are more likely to carry over into other issues. It is no surprise, then, that the leading cause of divorce in the United States is disagreements about money.

Excessive debt also brings health risks, such as insomnia, headaches, stomachaches, heart attacks, and depression. A wife named Marta relates: "My husband, Luís,

was so depressed about our debt that he slept most of the day. The man I had always relied on had become helpless." For some, the stress becomes unbearable. For example, BBC News reported that a wife in southeastern In-



Debt troubles can strain or even destroy a family

dia committed suicide after falling behind on payments for loans totaling the equivalent of \$840 (U.S.). She had borrowed the money to pay for her children's medical treatment.

What if your family is under stress because of debt? Let us consider some common chal-

^{*} Some names in this article have been changed.

lenges that couples face in dealing with debt and look at Bible principles that can help you to meet them.

CHALLENGE 1: We blame each other.

"I accused my wife of wasteful spending," admits Lukasz, "while she complained that we would have enough money if I had a job that provided year-round work." How can a couple keep debts from driving them apart?

A key to success: Work together against debt. It will not help matters if you vent anger on your mate-even if you had no part in incurring the debt. Now, perhaps more than ever, the Bible's counsel at Ephesians 4:31 applies: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness."

Fight the debt, not each other. A husband named Stephanos describes how he and his wife worked together: "We viewed our debt as a mutual enemy." Such cooperation is in harmony with Proverbs 13:10, which says: "By presumptuousness one only causes a struggle, but with those consulting together there is wisdom." Rather than presumptuously trying to solve things on your own, talk candidly about financial problems and then act unitedly.

Your children can join in the effort. A father named Edgardo, in Argentina, describes his family's experience: "My young son wanted a new bicycle, but we explained to him why we couldn't afford it. Instead, we gave him a bike that had belonged to his grandfather, and he enjoyed riding it very much. I learned the value of working together as a family."

TRY THIS: Arrange a time to talk openly and calmly about your debt. Acknowledge any mistakes you may have made. Rather than dwelling on the past, though, try to agree on principles that will guide your

future financial decisions.—Psalm 37:21; Luke 12:15.

CHALLENGE 2: Getting out of debt seems impossible.

"I had run up a large debt in my business, which was made even worse by the financial crisis in Argentina," recalls Enrique. "Then my wife needed surgery. I felt that I could never get out of debt, as though I were trapped in a spiderweb." A man named Roberto, in Brazil, lost all his savings in a business venture and was in debt to 12 banks. He says: "I was almost too embarrassed to face my friends. I felt like a loser."

What can you do if you feel overwhelmed by discouragement, guilt, or shame about your debt?

A key to success: Take control of your finances.*

- 1. Determine your current budget. Keep a record of all money moving in or out of your household for two weeks—or a month, if that is more practical. Add to this record expenses such as taxes, insurance, or clothing, which may occur much less frequently, and use monthly averages for them.
- 2. *Increase your income*. You could take on extra shifts at your current job, perform seasonal work, tutor a student, recycle, or make your hobby into a home business. Caution: Take care not to allow work to encroach on activities that are more important, such as your spiritual routine.
- 3. Reduce your expenses. Buy an item only if you need it, not just because it is on sale. (Proverbs 21:5) "Waiting to buy is good," says Enrique, quoted above, "since it helps you to decide if you really need the item or just want it." Here are some additional tips.

^{*} For more suggestions, see the cover series "How to Manage Money" in the September 2011 issue of Awake! published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

- Housing: If possible, move into a residence with a smaller monthly payment. Reduce your utility costs by conserving electricity, water, and heat.
- Food: Pack a lunch or snack instead of eating out regularly. Use grocery coupons and other special offers. "I save on fruits and vegetables if I shop at street markets just before they close," says Joelma, in Brazil.
- Transportation: Sell nonessential vehicles, and maintain what you have instead of quickly trading in for newer models. Use public transportation, or walk whenever you can.

After you reduce your expenses, you are ready to make the best use of your remaining money.

4. Analyze your debt and act. First, determine for each debt the interest rate, the fees, the impact of a late or missed payment, and the possibility that a payment is already overdue. Examine the wording of the loan or bill carefully, since creditors may be deceptive. For example, one short-term loan service in the United States stated that its interest rate was 24 percent, when, in fact, it was over 400 percent.

Next, determine the order in which you will tackle your debts. One approach is to pay toward debt with the highest interest rate first. Another option is to pay off smaller balances first, since receiving fewer bills each month will likely boost your morale. If you have loans with a high interest rate, you might benefit by getting a new loan at a lower rate to pay off the existing ones.

Finally, if you cannot meet your obligations, try to negotiate new payment plans with your creditors. You could ask for an extension or a lower interest rate. Some creditors may even be willing to reduce what you owe if you can pay the lower amount in full right now. Be honest and courteous in explaining your financial situation. (Colossians



Find practical ways to deal with debt as a family

4:6; Hebrews 13:18) Put any agreements in writing. Even if your first request is not successful, be willing to persist in asking for an adjustment if necessary.—Proverbs 6:1-5.

Of course, you will need to be realistic as you manage your finances. Even the best plan can fail as a result of factors beyond your control, since money often "makes wings for itself like those of an eagle and flies away toward the heavens."—Proverbs 23:4, 5.

TRY THIS: Once you have prepared an initial budget, discuss how everyone can reduce expenses or increase the family's income. Seeing one another's sacrifices can help to pull you together in the fight against debt.

CHALLENGE 3: Debt consumes our thinking.

The struggle to deal with debt can crowd out more important aspects of life. As a man named Georgios put it, "the biggest problem was that our whole life revolved around our debts. Matters that should have had priority got pushed into the background."

A key to success: Keep money in its proper place. In spite of your best efforts, you may be paying your creditors for many years. In the meantime, you can choose how you will view your circumstances. Rather than being obsessed with money or the lack of it, we are wise to heed the Bible's advice: "Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things."—1 Timothy 6:8.

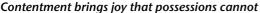
Being content with your financial situation allows you to "make sure of the more important things." (Philippians 1:10) These "more important things" include your friendship with God and with your family. Georgios, quoted above, says: "Even though we have not completely paid back our debts, they are no longer the focal point of our life. Our marriage is happier now that we spend more time with our children, with each other, and in spiritual activities together."

TRY THIS: List things that are truly valuable to you and that money cannot buy. Next, determine how to increase the time and energy you devote to each item on your list.

Debt problems create stress, and dealing with them calls for sacrifices; yet the results are worth the effort. A husband named Andrzej, in Poland, admits: "When I learned that my wife had guaranteed a large loan for a workmate who then vanished without repaying, our home atmosphere was tense, to say the least." Looking back on how he and his wife responded, though, he says: "We actually became more united—not by the problem itself, but by working together to solve it."

ASK YOURSELF...

- How can I help my family to get out of debt?
- How can we keep our debt from dominating or even destroying our relationship?





DRAW CLOSE TO GOD



"What Is Jehovah Asking Back From You?"

WHAT does Jehovah expect from those who want to worship him acceptably? Does he demand perfection, thus making it impossible for us imperfect humans to please him? Or does he expect only what is within our reach? The answers to those questions are vital if we are to find joy in serving God. Let us examine how the prophet Micah summed up God's requirements.-Read Micah 6:8.

"He has told you . . . what is good." We do not have to guess what God expects of us. He has told us, plainly outlining his requirements in the Bible. What God asks of us "is good." It could not be otherwise. "God is love," so he has our best interests at heart. (1 John 4:8; 5:3) Heeding his requirements is not only pleasing to him but also beneficial to us.—Deuteronomy 10:12, 13.

"What is Jehovah asking back from you?" Does God have the right to ask back anything from us? Of course he does! We owe him obedience as the Source and Sustainer of life. (Psalm 36:9) What, then, does he ask back from us? Micah sums up God's requirements with three phrases. The first two principally involve our dealings with fellow humans, and the third involves our relationship with God.

"Exercise justice." The Hebrew word for "justice," according to one reference work, "involves right and fair relationships in the community." God asks us to treat others according to what is right and fair by his standards. We exercise justice by being impartial, upright, and honest in our dealings with others. (Leviticus 19:15; Isaiah 1:17; Hebrews 13:18) When we act justly toward others, they may be moved to act justly toward us in return.—Matthew 7:12.

"To love kindness." God asks us not merely to show kindness but to love it. The Hebrew word rendered "kindness" (che'sedh) may also be rendered "loving-kindness" or "loyal love." Says one Bible scholar: "Love, mercy, and kindness are inadequate translations of [che'sedh]; it is no one of these virtues, but all of them together." If we love kindness, we show it willingly; we find pleasure in helping those in need. As a result, we experience the happiness that comes from giving.—Acts 20:35.

"To be modest in walking with your God." In the Bible, the phrase "to walk" means "to follow a certain course of action." We walk with God by following the life course he has outlined in the Bible. We need "to be modest" in pursuing such a course. How so? When we are modest before God, we realistically evaluate our position before him and recognize our limitations. Therefore, "to walk modestly with" means to have a realistic view of what he requires and of what we can give.

Thankfully, Jehovah never requires more than we can give. He is pleased with our best efforts to serve him. (Colossians 3:23) He understands our limitations. (Psalm 103:14) When we, with due modesty, learn to accept them as well, we can find joy in walking with him. Why not learn how you can begin walking with God? Such a course brings rich blessings from him.—Proverbs 10:22.

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR NOVEMBER:

■ Joel 1–Micah 7

OUR READERS ASK . . .

Is religious faith an emotional crutch?

■ An emotional crutch is a form of self-deception that causes a person to ignore reality and prevents him from reasoning logically. For example, some people use alcohol as a crutch. Initially, alcohol may make them feel more self-confident and able to cope with life's challenges. But in the long run, those who lean on the crutch of alcohol harm themselves. Can the same be said about religious faith?

Some equate faith with gullibility. They say that people who resort to faith do not want to think for themselves or allow hard evidence to influence their beliefs. Such skeptics imply that those with strong religious faith ignore reality.

The Bible has much to say about faith. Yet nowhere does it encourage us to be gullible or naive. Nor does it condone mental laziness. On the contrary, it labels people who put faith in every word they hear as inexperienced, even foolish. (Proverbs 14:15, 18) Really, how foolish it would be for us to accept an idea as true without checking the facts! That would be like covering our eyes and trying to cross a busy street just because someone tells us to do it.

Rather than encouraging blind faith, the Bible urges us to keep our figurative eyes open so that we are not deceived. (Matthew 16:6) We keep our eyes open by using our "power of reason." (Romans 12:1) The Bible trains us to reason on evidence and reach sound conclusions that are based on facts. Consider some examples from the writings of the apostle Paul.

When Paul wrote to those in the congregation in Rome, he did not want them to believe in God just because he told them to. Rather, he encouraged them to consider the evidence that God is real. He wrote: "His [God's] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation on-

ward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they [those who deny God's authority] are inexcusable." (Romans 1:20) Paul used a similar line of reasoning when writing his letter to the Hebrews. "Of course, every house is constructed by someone," he said, "but he that constructed all things is God." (Hebrews 3:4) In a letter to Christians living in the city of Thessalonica, Paul encouraged them to be selective in what they believed. He wanted them to "make sure of all things."—1 Thessalonians 5:21.

Religious faith that is *not* built on sound evidence can become a crutch, one that causes a person to be misled and suffer harm. Concerning some religious people in his day, Paul wrote: "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge." (Romans 10:2) How vital it is, then, that we follow Paul's advice to the Roman congregation! He wrote: "Be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) Faith based on accurate knowledge of God becomes,





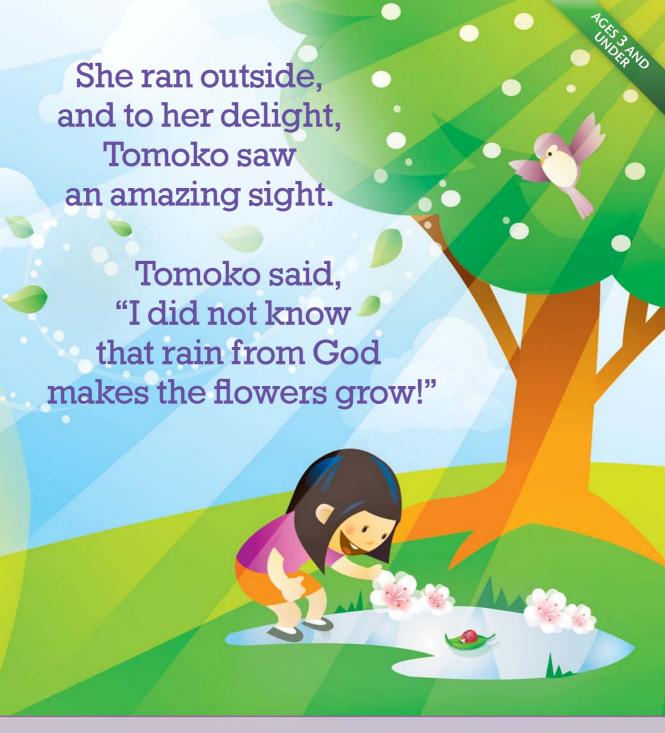
My Bible Lessons

A rainy day.
"I'm stuck inside.
Why won't it stop?"
Tomoko cried.





But then, surprise!
The sun appeared.
The rain was gone.
Tomoko cheered!



ACTIVITIES

Have your child point to:

Window Tomoko Flowers Bird Tree Find the hidden objects.
Ladybug Airplane
Read Acts 14:17.
Why did Jehovah
create the rain?

The Shepherd

"Like a shepherd he will shepherd his own drove. With his arm he will collect together the lambs; and in his bosom he will carry them."—ISAIAH 40:11.

SHEPHERDS are mentioned dozens of times throughout the Bible, from the first book, Genesis, to the last, Revelation. (Genesis 4:2; Revelation 12:5) Great men such as Abraham, Moses, and King David were shepherds. The psalmist David beautifully expressed the responsibilities and concerns of a good shepherd. And a psalm ascribed to Asaph mentions David as a shepherd over God's people of ancient times.—Psalm 78:70-72.

Later. in Jesus' day, shepherding

ferred to himself as "the fine shepherd" and often used the qualities of a good shepherd to teach important lessons. (John 10:2-4, 11) Even the Almighty, Jehovah God, is likened to "a shepherd."—Isaiah 40:10, 11; Psalm 23: 1-4.

What kinds of animals did a shepherd care for? What did his job involve? And what can we learn from those hard workers?

Sheep and Goats



Shepherds also cared for goats. The goats were uniformly black or brown. Their long, flapping ears easily got torn on thorns and briar bushes as they clambered on rocky hill-sides and grazed on shrubbery.

The shepherd faced the ongoing challenge of teaching the sheep and goats to obey his commands. Even so, good shepherds took tender care of the animals in their charge, even giving them names to which they would respond.—John 10:14, 16.

The Seasons of the Shepherd

In spring, each day a shepherd might take his flock from a pen near his home to graze on the fresh, succulent growth in the nearby village pastures. During this season, the birth of lambs and kids would expand the size of the flock. At that time, workers would also shear the winter fleece from the sheep, and this was an occasion to celebrate!

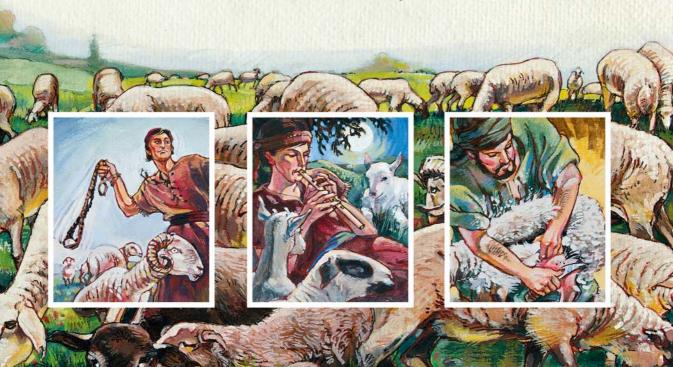
A villager might own only a few sheep. So he would hire a shepherd who would add the small flock to another one. Hired shepherds had a reputation for showing less concern for the animals of others than for their own.

—John 10:12, 13.

After the fields near the village were harvested, the shepherd would allow his sheep to graze on new shoots and on grain left among the stubble. When summer heat set in, shepherds moved their flocks to cooler pastures on higher ground. For days on end, shepherds would work and sleep outdoors, allowing the flock to graze on the steep green slopes and spending the nights guarding the open sheepfolds. At times, the shepherd might shelter his flock overnight in a cave, where they would be protected from jackals and hyenas. If the howl of a hyena panicked the flock of sheep in the dark of night, the shepherd's calm reassuring voice would still them.

Each evening, the shepherd counted the sheep and checked the health of the animals. In the morning, he would call, and the flock would follow him to the pasture ground. (John 10:3, 4) At midday, shepherds led the animals to cool pools of water to drink. When the pools dried up, the shepherd guided them to a well and drew water for them.

Toward the end of the dry season, a shepherd might move his flock to the coastal



plains and valleys. When the cold rains began, he would lead them back home to winter indoors. Otherwise, the animals could perish outside in the lashing rains, hailstorms, and snow. From November till spring, shepherds would not graze their flocks outdoors.

Equipped for Work

The shepherd's clothing was simple but robust. To protect him from rain and the frigid night air, he may have worn a mantle made of sheepskin, with the fleece turned inward. Against his skin, he wore a tunic. Sandals protected his feet from sharp rocks and thorns, and he wrapped his head in a woven woolen cloth.

The shepherd's equipment usually included the following: A scrip, or leather bag, that contained food supplies, such as bread, olives, dried fruit, and cheese (1); a rod, which was a formidable weapon, usually three feet (1 m) long with sharp slate embedded in the bulbous end (2); a knife (3); a staff, which the shepherd leaned on while walking and climbing (4); a personal water con-

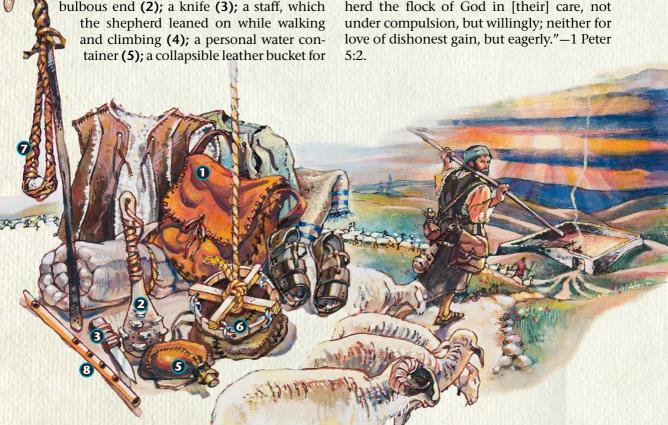
drawing water from deep wells (6); a sling, which he used to lob stones near the straying sheep or goats to frighten them back to the flock or to drive off prowling wild animals (7); and a reed pipe, which he played to entertain himself and to soothe the flock (8).

In return for the shepherd's care, the animals provided the necessities of life—such products as milk and meat for the table. The fleece and skins were used as a medium of exchange and for clothing and bottles. Goat's hair was spun into cloth, and both sheep and goats were used for sacrifices.

A Model to Follow

Good shepherds were diligent, dependable, and brave. They even risked their lives to protect the flock.—1 Samuel 17:34-36.

Little wonder, then, that Jesus and his disciples used the shepherd as a model for Christian overseers. (John 21:15-17; Acts 20: 28) Like a good shepherd in Bible times, congregation overseers today strive to "shepherd the flock of God in [their] care, not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly."—1 Peter 5:2





EUROPEAN COURT

UPHOLDS THE RIGHT TO CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES around the world are well-known for their neutral stand when it comes to the politics and wars of any nation. They firmly believe that they must "beat their swords into plowshares" and not "learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4) They do not interfere with those who choose to serve in the armed forces. But what if the conscience of a Witness does not permit him to serve in the military, yet the country in which he lives makes it mandatory? That was the situation faced by a young man named Vahan Bayatyan.

Events Leading Up to the European Court Case

Vahan was born in Armenia in April 1983. In 1996, he and other members of his family began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, and when he was 16 years old, he was baptized. From his study of the Bible, Vahan developed a deep regard for the teachings of Jesus Christ, including the direction Jesus gave his followers not to take up physical weapons of warfare. (Matthew 26:52) Therefore, only a short time after his baptism, Vahan faced a critical decision in his life.

Armenian law makes military service compulsory for all young men when they turn 18 years of age. If they refuse to perform this

service, they can be punished with imprisonment for up to three years. Vahan wanted to serve his fellow citizens. At the same time, he did not want to violate his Bible-trained conscience. So, what did he do?

As soon as he was deemed eligible for military service in 2001, Vahan began writing letters to the authorities in Armenia. In his letters, he stated that such service would violate his conscience and religious beliefs. At the same time, he declared his willingness to perform alternative civilian service instead.

More than one year passed, during which Vahan continued to appeal to authorities to recognize his conscientious refusal



Vahan Bayatyan in front of Nubarashen Prison in Armenia



Bayatyan with his legal counselors in the European Court of Human Rights, November 24, 2010

of military service. However, in September 2002, Vahan was arrested, and later he was charged with draft evasion. He was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. The prosecutor, though, was not satisfied with that punishment. Just one month after the sentencing, the prosecutor filed a motion with the appeal court, demanding a harsher sentence. He argued that Vahan's religiously motivated conscientious objection to military service was "unfounded and dangerous." The appeal court granted the prosecutor's petition, increasing Vahan's sentence to 30 months' imprisonment.

Vahan appealed this decision to Armenia's highest court. In January 2003, the Court of Cassation upheld the appeal court's judgment. Vahan was immediately transferred to a prison facility to begin serving his sentence along with murderers, drug dealers, and rapists.

Events in the European Court

Since 2001. Armenia has been a member of the Council of Europe. Its citizens therefore have a right to appeal cases to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) once they have exhausted all domestic remedies for justice. That is what Vahan chose to do. In his appeal he argued that his conviction for refusal to serve in the army had violated Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. He asked that his right to conscientious objection of military service be protected under this article—something that had never been successfully argued before.

On October 27, 2009, the ECHR issued its judgment. The court held that, in view of existing case law, freedom of conscience as defined in Article 9 of the European Convention does not protect the rights of conscientious objectors who refuse to serve in the military.

By that time, Vahan had long been released from prison, was married, and had a little boy. Vahan was disappointed by the judgment. He then had to make the choice either to drop the case or appeal to the Grand Chamber of the ECHR. He chose the latter. The Grand Chamber accepts only exceptional cases, so Vahan was pleased when it decided to review his case.

Finally, on July 7, 2011, in Strasbourg, France, the Grand Chamber of the ECHR issued its ruling. The court concluded by an overwhelming majority of 16 votes to 1 that Armenia violated the right of freedom of conscience of Vahan Bayatyan when it convicted and imprisoned him for his conscien-





Bayatyan with his wife, Tsovinar, and son, Vahe

tious objection to military service. The judge from Armenia provided the sole dissenting vote.

Why is that ruling significant? Because it was the first time in the history of the ECHR that the right to conscientious objection to military service was viewed as being fully protected under Article 9 of the Convention. As a result, the court views it as a violation of fundamental rights in a democratic society to imprison a conscientious objector.

The Court made the following remark about the position of Jehovah's Witnesses as conscientious objectors: "The Court therefore has no reason to doubt that the applicant's objection to military service was motivated by his religious beliefs, which were genuinely held and were in serious and insurmountable conflict with his obligation to perform military service."

Reaction to the Decision

Over the past two decades, over 450 conscientious objectors who are Jehovah's Witnesses have been sentenced in Armenia. At the time this article was being prepared, there were 58 young men in that country who were imprisoned for their conscientious refusal of military service on religious grounds. Five of those individuals were imprisoned after the landmark decision in the case of Bayatyan v. Armenia.* In one of those cases, when the young conscientious objector filed a motion requesting that the local prosecutor terminate the criminal proceedings against him for refusing military service on the basis of conscience, the prosecutor rejected his motion. In his written response, the prosecutor stated: "The judgment by the European Court in the case Bayatyan v. Armenia, dated July 7, 2011, does not apply in this case, since it is obvious that there are no similar circumstances in the two cases."

Why did the prosecutor feel that way? When Vahan Bayatyan was charged, there was no alternative civilian service provision in place. The government of Armenia asserts that since then, a law has been adopted making such a provision, so those opposed to military service now have the option of performing civilian service. However, the alternative service law is under military control, so it does not apply to many of the conscientious objectors who are presently being called up for military duty.

Vahan Bayatyan is pleased with the milestone decision that was made in his favor. The judgment now places an obligation on Armenia to stop prosecuting and imprisoning individuals whose deeply held religious convictions do not allow them to engage in military service.

It is not the purpose of Jehovah's Witnesses to introduce reform into the legal system of any country. However, just as young Vahan Bayatyan did, they seek to establish their legal rights based on some of the existing laws governing the countries in which they live. Why? In order that they may continue to live peaceably and freely obey all the commands of their Leader, Jesus Christ.

^{*} Two of them were sentenced on July 7, 2011, the same day as the ECHR ruling.



Why does God allow suffering?
SEE PAGES 8-9.



Why does mankind need a world government? SEE PAGES 16-17.



How can you stop debts from consuming your thinking? SEE PAGE 21.



Is religious faith just an emotional crutch?

SEE PAGE 23.

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.

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