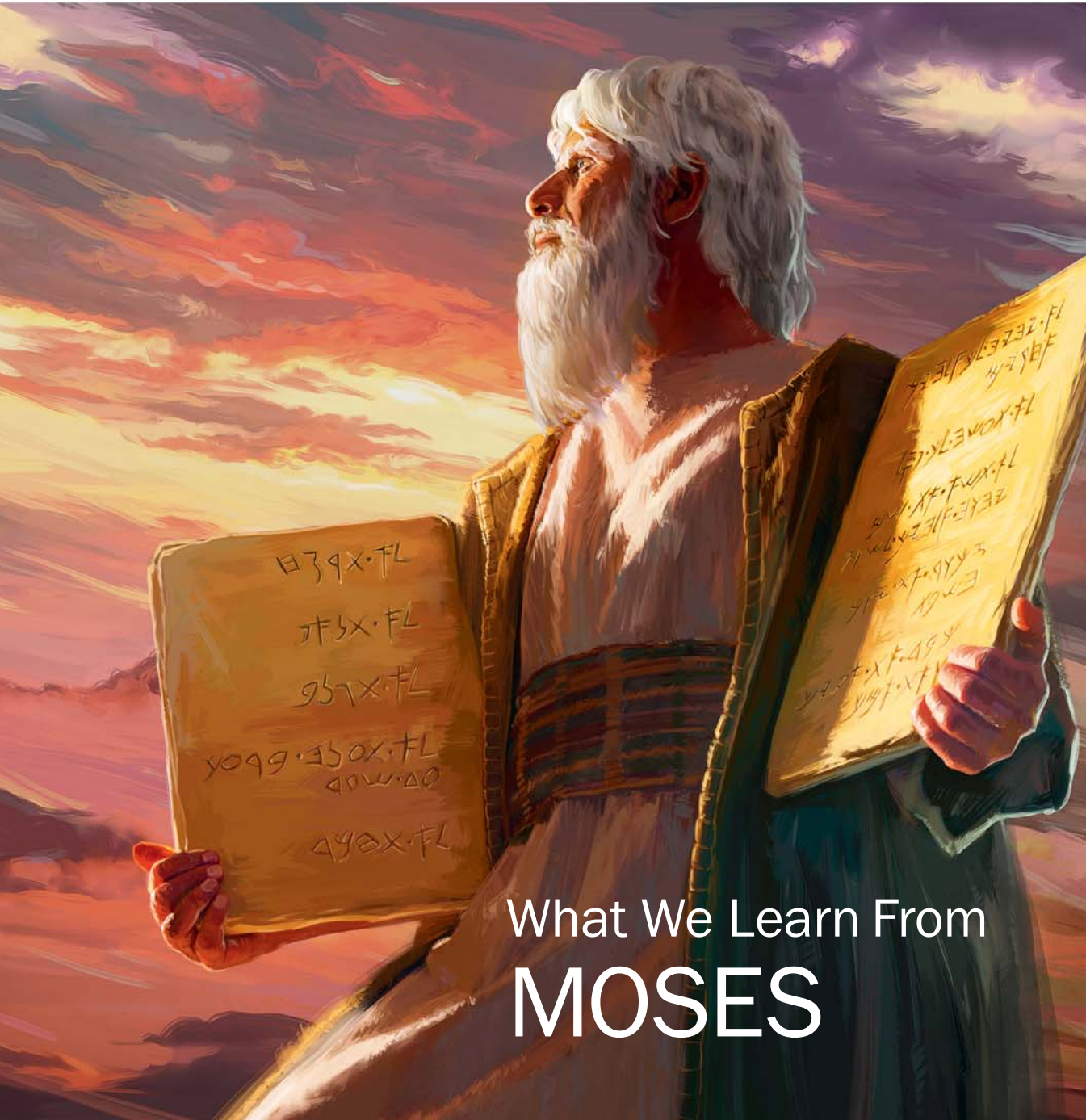


FEBRUARY 1, 2013

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



What We Learn From  
**MOSES**

THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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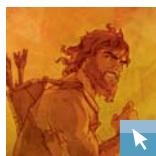
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# WHO WAS MOSES?

**What comes to mind when you hear the name Moses? Do you think of . . .**

- the baby whose mother hid him in a basket in the Nile River?
- the boy who was raised in luxury in Egypt by the daughter of Pharaoh—yet never forgot that he was an Israelite?
- the man who lived as a shepherd in Midian for 40 years?
- the man who had a conversation with Jehovah\* in front of a burning bush?
- the man who stood up to the king of Egypt, boldly asking for the Israelites to be freed from slavery?
- the man who, at God's direction, announced the Ten Plagues upon Egypt when its king defied the true God?
- the man who led the Israelites in a grand exodus from Egypt?
- the man who was used in the parting of the Red Sea?
- the man who gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments from God?

**M**OSES had all those experiences and more. No wonder this faithful man is highly respected by Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike!

Without question, Moses was a prophet who showed “great awesomeness.” (Deuteronomy 34:10-12) He allowed God to use him in a mighty way. Yet, Moses was an ordinary human. Just like the prophet Elijah, who appeared beside Moses



in a vision during Jesus' earthly ministry, Moses was a man “with feelings like ours.” (James 5:17; Matthew 17:1-9) Moses faced many of the same problems that we encounter, and he overcame them successfully.

Would you like to know how he did so? Consider three of the good qualities that Moses displayed and what we can learn from his example.

\* Jehovah is the name of God as revealed in the Bible.





# MOSES

## A MAN OF FAITH

**WHAT IS FAITH?** As used in the Bible, “faith” involves firm belief based on solid evidence. Someone who has faith in God is confident that He will fulfill all of His promises.

**HOW DID MOSES DISPLAY FAITH?** Moses centered his life on God’s promises. (Genesis 22:15-18) He had the opportunity to live a comfortable life amid the luxuries of Egypt, but he gave up that opportunity, “choosing to be ill-treated with the people of God rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin.” (Hebrews 11:25) Was that an impulsive decision, one that he would later regret? No, for the Bible says that Moses “continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible.” (Hebrews 11:27) Moses never regretted the choices he made in faith.

Moses sought to strengthen the faith of others. Consider, for example, what happened when the Israelites seemed trapped between Pharaoh’s army and the Red Sea. Terrified by what appeared to be imminent calamity, the Israelites cried out to Jehovah and to Moses. How would Moses respond?

Moses may have had little idea that God was about to part the Red Sea, thereby opening up an escape route for the Israelites. However, Moses was confident that God would do *something* to protect His people. And Moses wanted his fellow Israelites to have that same conviction. We read: “Moses said to the people: ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will perform for you today.’” (Exodus 14:13) Did Moses succeed in fortifying the faith of his fellow Israelites? Indeed, for the Bible says regarding not just Moses but all the Israelites: “By faith *they* passed through the Red Sea as on dry land.” (Hebrews 11:29) Moses’ faith benefited not only himself but everyone who learned from it.

**WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FOR US?** We can imitate Moses by centering our life on God’s promises. For example, God promises to care for our material needs if we give his worship the top priority in our life. (Matthew 6:33) True, we may find it a challenge to resist the emphasis on material things that is so prevalent today. But we can be sure that when we do our best to keep our life simple and focused on our worship, Jehovah will provide all that we need. He guarantees: “I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.”—Hebrews 13:5.

We also strive to help others to grow in faith. For instance, wise parents recognize the tremendous opportunity they have to build faith in their children. As they grow, children need the vital knowledge that God exists and that he has given us standards of right and wrong. In addition, they need to be convinced that following his standards really is the best way of life. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Parents give their children a precious gift when they help them to have faith that God “is real and that he rewards those who sincerely try to find him.”—Hebrews 11:6, *Holy Bible—Easy-to-Read Version*.





# MOSES A MAN OF HUMILITY

**WHAT IS HUMILITY?** Humility involves freedom from arrogance or pride. A humble person does not view others as inferior to himself. Any imperfect human who is humble should also be modest, that is, aware of his limitations.

**HOW DID MOSES DISPLAY HUMILITY?** Moses did not let authority go to his head. Often, when a man receives a little authority, his humility—or lack thereof—quickly becomes evident. Nineteenth-century author Robert G. Ingersoll put it this way: “Most people can bear adversity. But if you wish to know what a man really is, give him power.” In that sense, Moses set a sterling example of humility. How so?

Moses received great authority, for Jehovah commissioned him to lead Israel. Yet, that power never made Moses proud. Consider, for example, the modest way he handled a difficult question about inheritance rights. (Numbers 27:1-11) The question was a weighty one, as the decision would set a legal precedent for generations to come.

How would Moses respond? Would he reason that as leader of Israel, he was qualified to make a decision in the matter? Would he lean on his natural ability, his years of experience, or his intimate knowledge of Jehovah’s thinking?

Perhaps a proud man would have done so. But not Moses. The Bible record tells us: “Moses presented [the] case before Jehovah.” (Numbers 27:5) Just think! Even after some 40 years of leading the nation of Israel, Moses relied, not on himself, but on Jehovah. Here we see Moses’ humility at its best.

Moses did not jealously guard his authority. He rejoiced when Jehovah allowed other Israelites to act as prophets alongside him. (Numbers 11:24-29) When his father-in-law suggested that he delegate some of his workload, Moses humbly applied the suggestion. (Exodus 18:13-24) And toward the end of his life, although

still physically strong, Moses asked Jehovah to appoint a successor for him. When Jehovah selected Joshua, Moses wholeheartedly supported the younger man, urging the people to follow Joshua’s lead into the Promised Land. (Numbers 27:15-18; Deuteronomy 31:3-6; 34:7) To be sure, Moses counted it a privilege to lead the Israelites in worship. But he did not put his authority ahead of the welfare of others.

**WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FOR US?** We never want to let power, authority, or natural ability go to our head. Remember: In order to be useful to Jehovah, our humility should always exceed our ability. (1 Samuel 15:17) When we are truly humble, we will strive to apply the Bible’s wise advice: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding.”—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Moses’ example also teaches us not to place too much importance on our status or authority.

Do we benefit from imitating Moses’ example of humility? Without question! When we cultivate genuine humility, we make life easier for the people around us, endearing ourselves to them. More important, we endear ourselves to Jehovah God, who himself displays this beautiful quality. (Psalm 18:35) “God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones.” (1 Peter 5:5) What a compelling reason to imitate the humility of Moses!



# MOSES

## A MAN OF LOVE

**WHAT IS LOVE?** Love involves deep affection for others. A loving person shows by his words and actions how he feels about those dear to him, even when doing so requires personal sacrifice.

**HOW DID MOSES DISPLAY LOVE?** Moses showed love for God. In what way? Well, recall the words recorded at 1 John 5:3: “This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments.” Moses lived by that principle. In all that God asked him to do—from an assignment as daunting as confronting mighty Pharaoh to a task as seemingly simple as stretching out his rod over the Red Sea—Moses obeyed. Whether the command was easy to fulfill or difficult, Moses complied. “He did just so.”—Exodus 40:16.

Moses showed love for his fellow Israelites. They recognized that Jehovah was using Moses to guide his people, so they approached Moses with their various problems. We read: “The people kept standing before Moses from the morning till the evening.” (Exodus 18:13-16) Imagine how draining it must have been for Moses to listen—hour after hour—as the Israelites unburdened themselves of their concerns! Yet, Moses was happy to help the people he loved.

Besides listening to them, Moses also prayed for his loved ones. He even prayed for those who had wronged him! For example, when Moses’ sister, Miriam, murmured against Moses, Jehovah struck her with leprosy. Rather than rejoicing over her punishment, Moses immediately interceded for her, praying: “O God, please! Heal her, please!” (Numbers 12:13) What else but love would have caused Moses to offer such a selfless prayer?

**WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FOR US?** We can imitate Moses by cultivating deep love for God. Such love moves us to obey his commands “from the heart.” (Romans 6:17) When we obey Jeho-

vah from our heart, we bring joy to his heart. (Proverbs 27:11) We also benefit ourselves. After all, when we serve God out of genuine love, not only will we do the right things but we will *enjoy* doing them!—Psalm 100:2.

Another way we can imitate Moses is to cultivate self-sacrificing love for others. When friends or family members approach us with their concerns, love moves us to (1) give them our heartfelt attention; (2) empathize with them, or feel what they feel; and (3) let them know that we care.

Like Moses, we can pray for our loved ones. Sometimes we may feel helpless when they share their problems with us. We might even lament, “I’m sorry that all I can do is pray for you.” But remember: “When a righteous person prays, that prayer carries great power.” (James 5:16, *The Kingdom New Testament*) Our prayers may actually move Jehovah to do something for the person that He might not otherwise have done. Really, then, what better thing could we do for our loved ones than to pray for them?\*

Would you not agree that we can learn much from Moses? Although an ordinary person, he set an extraordinary example of faith, humility, and love. The more closely we imitate his example, the more we benefit both ourselves and others.—Romans 15:4. ■

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\* In order for God to listen to our prayers, we must sincerely strive to meet his requirements. For more information, see chapter 17 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

# “He Is the God . . . of the Living”

Is death stronger than God? Of course not! How could death—or any other “enemy”—be stronger than “God Almighty”? (1 Corinthians 15:26; Exodus 6:3) God has the power to undo death by means of the resurrection, and he promises to do just that in his new world.\* How sure is that promise? God’s own Son, Jesus, tells us with words that can fill our hearts with hope.—**Read Matthew 22: 31, 32.**

Speaking to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, Jesus said: “As regards the resurrection of the dead, did you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob’? He is the God, not of the dead, but of the living.” Jesus here referred to the conversation that God had with Moses at the burning bush about 1514 B.C.E. (Exodus 3:1-6) According to Jesus, Jehovah’s words to Moses—“I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob”—indicate that the resurrection promise is certain to be fulfilled. How so?

Consider first the setting. At the time that Jehovah spoke to Moses, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had long been dead—Abraham for 329 years, Isaac for 224, and Jacob for 197. Yet, Jehovah said “I am”—not “I was”—their God. Jehovah spoke of those three dead patriarchs as if they were still alive. Why?

Jesus explained: “He [Jehovah] is the God, not of the dead, but of the living.” Think for a moment about the implication of those words. If there were no resurrection, then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

would remain forever in the clutches of death. If that were so, Jehovah would be the God of corpses. That, in turn, would mean that death is stronger than Jehovah—as if he were too weak to free his faithful servants from the grip of death.

What, then, may we conclude about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all faithful servants of Jehovah who have died? Jesus made this forceful statement: “They are all living to him.” (Luke 20:38) Indeed, Jehovah’s purpose to resurrect his faithful servants who have died is so sure of fulfillment that he thinks of them as living. (Romans 4:16, 17) Jehovah will keep all such ones in his limitless memory until his due time to restore them to life.

Does the prospect of being reunited with a dead loved one appeal to you? If so, remember that Jehovah is infinitely stronger than death.

## Jehovah is infinitely stronger than death

Nothing can stop him from fulfilling his promise to resurrect the dead. Why not learn more about the resurrection promise and the God who will fulfill it? Doing so will surely draw you closer to Jehovah, “the God . . . of the living.” ■

\* To learn more about God’s promise of a resurrection to life in a righteous new world, see chapter 7 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.





AS TOLD BY LUIS ALIFONSO

YEAR BORN:

1982

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

HISTORY:

RAISED AS A MORMON

## “They wanted me to prove the truth to myself”

**MY PAST:** I was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, the last of four children. My parents were well-educated and wanted to raise their children in a positive social environment. Four years before I was born, my parents met Mormon missionaries. Impressed by how clean-cut and well-mannered the young men were, my parents soon decided that our family would become one of the first families on the island to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or the Mormon Church.

As I grew up, I enjoyed the social activities at church and respected the Mormon focus on family life and moral values. I was proud to be a Mormon and made it my goal to become a missionary.

When I was 18 years old, my family relocated to the United States with the intention of furthering my college education. About a year later, my aunt and uncle, who are Jehovah’s Witnesses, came to visit us in Florida. They invited us to attend a Bible convention with them. I was impressed that everyone around me was looking up the scriptures and taking notes. So I asked for a pen and paper and started to do the same.

After the convention my aunt and uncle said that since I was interested in becoming a missionary, they could help me to learn something about the Bible. I thought it was a good idea because at the time, I had been exposed much more to the Book of Mormon than to the Bible.

**HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:** During our Bible discussions over the phone, my aunt and uncle always encouraged me to compare my beliefs with Bible teachings. They wanted me to prove the truth to myself.

There were many things about the Mormon faith that I had accepted, but I wasn’t really sure how the Scriptures



compared with those ideas. My aunt sent me the November 8, 1995, issue of the *Awake!* magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, which included some articles on the Mormon faith. I was surprised that I wasn't familiar with many of the Mormon teachings. That moved me to search through the official Mormon Web site to confirm that what was stated in *Awake!* was factual. It was, and those facts were further confirmed when I visited Mormon museums in Utah.

I had always believed that the Book of Mormon and the Bible complemented each other. But when I began to read the Bible in earnest, I noticed contradictions between Mormon teachings and statements in the Bible. For example, at Ezekiel 18:4, the Bible says that the soul dies. However, the Book of Mormon, at Alma 42:9, states: "The soul could never die."

In addition to doctrinal discrepancies, I was troubled by the nationalistic ideas taught by the Mormons. For example, Mormons are taught that the garden of Eden was in Jackson County, Missouri, U.S.A. And church prophets say that when "the Kingdom of God will bear rule, the flag of the United States will proudly flutter unsullied on the flag staff of liberty and equal rights."

I wondered how the country of my birth—or any other country—would fit into this picture. I brought this topic up in conversation one evening when I received a phone call from a young Mormon who was being trained to become a missionary. I asked him plainly whether he would be willing to fight against fellow Mormons if his country was at war with theirs. I was surprised when he said yes! I dug deeper into the teachings of my faith and also consulted with responsible Mormon Church leaders. I was told that the answers to my questions involved mysteries that one day would be solved as the light became brighter.

Disappointed by their explanation, I looked more closely at myself and my reason for wanting to become a Mormon missionary. I realized that I was attracted to the idea of becoming a mis-

sionary just as I would be to any other humanitarian cause. The social status that would naturally come with being a missionary also appealed to me. But as far as God was concerned, I didn't really know that much about him. Although I had looked through the Bible many times in the past, I had not truly valued it. I had no idea of God's purpose for the earth or for mankind.

**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** Through my study of the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, I learned, among other things, what God's name is, what happens at death, and what Jesus' role is in fulfilling God's purpose. At last I was becoming familiar with this wonderful book, and I enjoyed sharing with others the truths I was learning. I always knew that God existed, but now I could speak to him in prayer as my best Friend. I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses on July 12, 2004, and six months later began working full-time in the Christian ministry.

For five years, I worked at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. I thoroughly enjoyed being able to help in the production of Bibles and Bible-based literature that benefit millions around the earth, and I continue to enjoy helping others learn about God. ■





## When Your Child Is Disabled

**CARLO:**\* *“Our son, Angelo, has Down syndrome. His illness drains our physical, mental, and emotional strength. Imagine the energy you need to look after a healthy child, and then multiply that by a hundred. Sometimes our marriage suffers.”*

**MIA:** *“It takes persistence and a tremendous amount of patience to teach Angelo the simplest things. When I get really tired, I tend to get irritable and impatient with my husband, Carlo. Sometimes we disagree on issues, and then we get into an argument.”*

Can you recall the day that your child was born? You were no doubt eager to hold the baby. For parents like Carlo and Mia, however, joy becomes mingled with anxiety when they are told that their child is sick or disabled.

Do you have a disabled child? Then you may wonder if you can cope. If so, do not despair. Parents like you have successfully dealt with simi-

lar problems. Consider three common challenges you might face and how the wisdom found in the Bible can help you.

### CHALLENGE 1: YOU FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THE DIAGNOSIS.

Many parents feel crushed when they learn that their child is ill. “When the doctors told me that our son, Santiago, had cerebral palsy,

\* Names in this article have been changed.

I couldn't believe it," says Juliana, a mother in Mexico. "I felt that the world was falling in on me." Others may feel as did an Italian mother named Villana. "I chose to have a baby even though there are risks for women my age," she says. "Now, when my son faces problems related to his Down syndrome, I feel guilty."

If you struggle with feelings of despair or guilt, realize that your reaction is *normal*. Sickness was not part of God's original purpose. (Genesis 1:27, 28) He did not create parents with the ability to accept easily what is unnatural. In a sense, you may need to "grieve" for what was lost—the health of your child. It will take time to sort out your emotions and adapt to your new situation.

What if you feel responsible for your child's disability? Remember that no one understands fully how heredity, environment, and other factors affect a child's health. On the other hand, you may feel inclined to blame your spouse. Resist that urge. You will do better if you cooperate with your mate and concentrate on caring for your child.—Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10.

**SUGGESTION:** Learn about your child's condition. "It takes wisdom to have a good family," the Bible says, "and it takes understanding to make it strong."—Proverbs 24:3, *New Century Version*.

You can learn much from medical professionals and reliable publications. You might compare the process of learning about your child's condition to mastering a new language. At first, it will be difficult, but you can learn it.

Carlo and Mia, quoted in the introduction, sought information from their doctor and an organization that specializes in their son's condition. "This helped us to understand not only the problems that we could expect but also the 'positive' aspects of Down syndrome," they say. "We saw that our son could lead a life that in many respects would be normal. This comforted us a lot."

**TRY THIS:** Focus on what your child can do. Plan to engage in activities as a family. When your child achieves even a small "victory," be quick to offer commendation and share in his or her joy.

## CHALLENGE 2: YOU FEEL EXHAUSTED AND EMOTIONALLY ISOLATED.

You may feel that caring for your sick child consumes all your energy. Jenney, a mother in New Zealand, says, "For a few years after my son was diagnosed with spina bifida, I would be exhausted and weepy if I tried to do anything extra around the home."

Another challenge may be that you feel isolated. Ben has a son who suffers from muscular dystrophy and Asperger's syndrome. Ben says, "Most people will never really understand what our life is like." You may long to talk with someone. Yet, most of your friends have healthy children. So you feel reluctant to confide in them.

**SUGGESTION:** Ask for help. And accept it when it is offered. Juliana, quoted earlier, admits, "Sometimes my husband and I are embarrassed to ask for help." However, she adds, "We have learned that we are not self-sufficient. When others help us, we don't feel so alone." If a close friend or family member offers to sit with your child at a social event or a Christian meeting, accept gratefully. "A true companion is loving all the time," says a Bible proverb, "and is a brother that is born for when there is distress."—Proverbs 17:17.

Take care of your own health. Just as an ambulance must refuel regularly if it is to continue taking patients to the hospital, you must restore your energy with proper nutrition, exercise, and rest so that you can continue giving your child the care he or she deserves. Javier, who has a crippled son, puts it this way: "My son cannot walk, so I feel that I should try to eat well. After all, I am the one who moves him around. My feet are his feet!"

How can you find time to look after your health? Some parents take turns caring for their child. One parent is thus able to rest or care for other personal needs. You will need to buy out time from nonessential activities, and it can be a challenge to maintain a balance. But as Mayuri, a mother in India, says, "Eventually you get into a routine."

Talk to a trustworthy friend. Even friends who do not have sick children can be empathetic





Show interest in all your children

listeners. You can also pray to Jehovah God. Will prayer really help? Yazmin has two children with cystic fibrosis, and she admits, “There have been moments of such intense pressure that I have felt like I was choking to death.” Yet, she adds: “I pray to Jehovah for relief and strength. Then I feel that I can carry on.”—Psalm 145:18.

**TRY THIS:** Review what you eat, when you exercise, and how much sleep you are getting. Identify how you could buy out time from less-important tasks so that you can care for your health. Keep adjusting your schedule as needed.

### CHALLENGE 3: YOU GIVE YOUR SICK CHILD MORE ATTENTION THAN YOU GIVE THE REST OF THE FAMILY.

A child’s illness may affect what the family eats, where the family goes, and how much time parents spend with each child. As a result, the other children may feel neglected. Furthermore, parents can become so busy caring for their sick child that their marriage suffers. “Sometimes my wife says that she is shouldering most of the burden and that I couldn’t care less about our son,” says Lionel, a father in Liberia. “I feel belittled, and sometimes I respond unkindly.”

**SUGGESTION:** To reassure all your children that you are interested in them, plan activities that they enjoy. “At times, we do something special for our eldest son,” says Jenney, quoted earlier, “even if we just have lunch at his favorite restaurant.”

To protect your marriage, talk to and pray with your mate. Aseem, a father in India whose son suffers from seizures, says: “Though my wife and I sometimes feel strained and frustrated, we make it a point to sit down, talk, and pray together. Each morning, before our children wake up, we spend time together discussing a verse from the Bible.” Other couples talk privately before going to sleep. Your intimate conversations and sincere prayers will strengthen your marriage during periods of intense stress. (Proverbs 15:22) As one couple put it, “some of the sweetest moments of our life together have been during the most difficult days.”

**TRY THIS:** Commend your other children for any support that they give to your ill child. Regularly express your love and appreciation for them and for your mate.

### REMAIN OPTIMISTIC

The Bible promises that soon God will remove every disease and disability that plagues both young and old. (Revelation 21:3, 4) In that day, “no resident will say: ‘I am sick.’”<sup>\*</sup>—Isaiah 33:24.

In the meantime, you can succeed as the parent of a disabled child. “Don’t be discouraged when it seems that everything is going wrong,” say Carlo and Mia, quoted earlier. “Concentrate on the wonderful things about your child, because there are many of them.” ■

<sup>\*</sup> You can read more about the Bible’s promise of perfect health in chapter 3 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

### ASK YOURSELF . . .

- *What do I do to keep my own physical, emotional, and spiritual health as strong as possible?*
- *When was the last time I commended my other children for the help they give?*



# WHAT IS THE “Gospel of Judas”?

**I**N April 2006, newspapers worldwide carried the startling story that a team of scholars was releasing to the public the contents of a newly discovered ancient text entitled “Gospel of Judas.” These articles referred to scholarly claims that this text revolutionizes understanding of the figure of Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus. According to such claims, Judas was actually a hero, the apostle who best understood Jesus, delivering him for execution at Jesus’ request.

Is this text authentic? And if so, does it reveal some previously hidden knowledge regarding the historical figures Judas Iscariot, Jesus Christ, or early Christians? Should it affect our understanding of Christianity?

## THE DISCOVERY OF THE “GOSPEL OF JUDAS”

How the “Gospel of Judas” was discovered remains somewhat uncertain. Rather than being discovered and documented by archaeologists, the document abruptly appeared on the antiquities market in the late 1970’s or early 1980’s. It was likely discovered in Egypt in 1978 in an abandoned tomb, possibly within a cave. It was one of four separate texts contained in a codex (a type of ancient book) written in Coptic (a language derived from ancient Egyptian).

Preserved for centuries in the dry Egyptian climate, the leather-bound codex was in a fragile and rapidly deteriorating state. A few scholars were briefly shown the codex in 1983; but the asking price was exorbitant, and no sale was



A depiction of Judas betraying Jesus,  
by 19th-century illustrator Gustave Doré

made. Further years of neglect and improper storage led to accelerated deterioration of the codex. In 2000, it was purchased by a Swiss antiquities dealer. She eventually turned it over to an international team of experts who, working under the auspices of the Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art and the National Geographic Society, were charged with the complex task of restoring and reconstructing the codex, some of which had now deteriorated into small fragments. This team would also determine the age of the codex and translate and interpret its contents.

Carbon-14 dating authenticated the codex as likely coming from the third or the fourth century C.E. However, the scholars surmised that the Coptic text of the “Gospel of Judas” had been translated from its original Greek at a much earlier period. What was that original period and setting in which the “Gospel of Judas” was composed?

#### THE “GOSPEL OF JUDAS”—A GNOSTIC GOSPEL

The first mention of the existence of a work called the “Gospel of Judas” is found in the writings of Irenaeus, a professed Christian author of the late second century C.E. In a work called *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus writes concerning one of the many groups whose teachings he opposed: “They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as none of the

a select few.\* Some of those Gnostics believed that the physical world was a prison. Therefore, the “creator god” of the Hebrew Scriptures was actually a lesser god who was opposed to the various perfect gods. One with true “knowledge” understood this “secret” and sought release from physical existence.

That is the approach reflected in the “Gospel of Judas.” It opens with the words: “The secret word of declaration by which Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot, during eight days, three days before he celebrated Passover.”

Was this codex the very text that Irenaeus had written about, which for centuries was presumed lost? Marvin Meyer, a member of the initial team that analyzed and translated this codex, says that Irenaeus’ “brief description fits quite well the present Coptic text entitled the *Gospel of Judas*.”

#### THE FIGURE OF JUDAS IN THIS GOSPEL —A DEBATE AMONG SCHOLARS

In the “Gospel of Judas,” Jesus laughs scornfully when his disciples display their lack of proper knowledge. But Judas is the only one of the 12 apostles who shows an understanding of Jesus’ true nature. Therefore, Jesus privately shares with him “the mysteries of the kingdom.”

The initial textual reconstruction by the team of scholars was heavily influenced by Irenaeus’ description of the gospel. In their translation, Judas is favored by Jesus as the one disciple who would understand the mysteries and “reach” the “kingdom.” The misled apostles would name a replacement for Judas, but he would then become the “thirteenth spirit,” which would “exceed all [the other disciples]” because, says Jesus, “you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.”

Best-selling authors, such as Bart Ehrman and Elaine Pagels, who are also prominent schol-

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\* These gospels are often named after the ones who are alleged to have better understood Jesus’ true teachings, as is the case with the “Gospel of Thomas” and the “Gospel of Mary Magdalene.” In all, about 30 such ancient writings have been identified.

“It is not a Gospel written in  
Judas’s own time by someone  
who actually knew him”

others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal. By him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they entitle the Gospel of Judas.”

Irenaeus was especially intent on refuting various teachings of Gnostic Christians, who claimed that they held revealed inner knowledge. Gnosticism is an umbrella term encompassing many groups, all with their own understanding and interpretation of Christian “truth.” Gnostics advanced interpretations based on their own writings, which proliferated during the second century C.E.

Such Gnostic gospels often claimed that the prominent apostles of Jesus misunderstood his message and that there is a secret teaching that Jesus passed on that was understood by only

None of the scholars  
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Kenneth  
Garrett/National  
Geographic  
Stock

ars of early Christianity and Gnosticism, quickly published their own analyses and commentaries of the “Gospel of Judas” that substantially followed the textual reconstruction by the original team. However, shortly thereafter, other scholars, such as April DeConick and Birger Pearson, expressed concern. They claimed that in its bid for a media exclusive, the National Geographic Society rushed the publication of the ancient text. Additionally, the normal academic process of thorough analysis and prepublication peer review was bypassed, as the team was required to sign nondisclosure agreements.

Working independently, DeConick and Pearson both concluded that some of the key sections of the fragmentary codex had been mistranslated by the previous scholars. According to DeConick’s reconstruction of the text, Jesus calls Judas the “Thirteenth Demon,” not the “thirteenth spirit.”\* Jesus also tells Judas unequivocally that he will *not* ascend to the “kingdom.” Rather than ‘exceeding’ the other disciples, Jesus says to Judas: “You will do worse than all of them. For the man that clothes me, you will sacrifice him.” In DeConick’s view, the “Gospel of Judas” is an ancient Gnostic parody that mocks all the apostles. The definitive conclusion held by DeConick and Pearson is that in this “Gospel of Judas,” Judas is no hero.

\* The scholars who adopt the view that Judas is a demon in this text—one who understood Jesus’ identity better than the other disciples—note its similarity to the way the demons in the Gospel accounts of the Bible accurately proclaimed Jesus’ identity.—Mark 3:11; 5:7.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE “GOSPEL OF JUDAS”?

Whether they viewed the Judas of this gospel as a hero or a demon, none of the scholars who analyzed this text claim that it contains accurate historical information. Bart Ehrman explains: “It is not a Gospel written by Judas, or one that even claims to be. . . . It is not a Gospel written in Judas’s own time by someone who actually knew him. . . . It is not a book, therefore, that will provide us with additional information about what actually happened in Jesus’ lifetime.”

The “Gospel of Judas” is a Gnostic text from the second century C.E., originally written in Greek. Whether this newly discovered “Gospel of Judas” is identical to the text that Irenaeus referred to remains a matter of scholarly debate. But the “Gospel of Judas” clearly offers important evidence only regarding a period in which “Christianity” had become fractured and divided by many competing sects and doctrines. Rather than undermining Scripture, the “Gospel of Judas” actually confirms apostolic warnings, such as that of Paul recorded at Acts 20:29, 30: “I know that after my going away . . . from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.” ■



## Where did the Devil come from?

God did not create the Devil. Instead, God created the angel who later *became* the Devil, also known as Satan. Jesus implied that at one time the Devil had been truthful and guiltless. Originally, then, the Devil was a righteous angelic son of God.—**Read John 8:44.**

## How could an angel become the Devil?

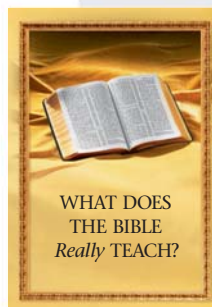
The angel who became the Devil chose to oppose God and incited the first human pair to join him. He thus *made himself* Satan, which means “Resister.”—**Read Genesis 3:1-5; Revelation 12:9.**

Like the rest of God’s intelligent creatures, the angel that became the Devil had the freedom to choose between doing right and doing wrong, but he developed a desire to be worshipped. His desire for glory was stronger than his desire to please God.—**Read Matthew 4:8, 9; James 1:13, 14.**

How has the Devil continued to influence humans? Should you fear him? You can find the answers to these questions in the Bible.



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



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