

How We Control You

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individual, just because it has been made available on a computer network and using it will save him work. Responsible Christians do not presume to prepare Bible talks or meeting parts and make them available on computer networks for others to use. However, the computer and the Society's *Watchtower Library* on CD-ROM may be valuable tools in the hands of the individual brother, contributing to effective research in the limited time available.

⁷ As for reproducing and distributing computer programs, lists, and related documentation among the brothers, and preparing and distributing parts on the Service Meeting and Theocratic Ministry School by electronic or other means, it is usually better for brothers to prepare their own material, with local benefits in mind. (1 Tim. 4:13, 15) On no account should congregational connections ever be exploited for making financial gain.

⁸ What about the distribution of computer printouts of scriptures used in the *Watchtower Study* or in the Congregation Book Study? Well, it may be preferable for publishers to make their individual notes and markings right in the Bible and the publications being studied. At the meeting, use of computer printouts of Scripture texts that are cited in the publications could discourage use of the Bible itself in finding scriptures. Yet looking up Scripture texts during a Bible study or at a congregation meeting is part of the training received, equipping us for effective use of the Bible in the field ministry. In most instances, and especially with longer quotations, reading directly from the Bible is more effective, particularly when the audience is encouraged to follow along in the Bible.

⁹ **Other Serious Pitfalls:** As outlined on page 17 of the August 1, 1993, issue of *The Watchtower*, connecting a computer to an electronic bulletin board can open the way to serious spiritual dangers. Just as an unscrupulous individual can place on a bulletin board a virus—a program designed to corrupt and destroy computer files—apostates, clergymen, and persons seeking to corrupt others morally or otherwise can freely place their poisonous ideas on bulletin boards. Unless a bulletin board, even one labeled “JW Only,” is properly supervised, with its use being limited to those who are mature, faithful servants of Jehovah, it could expose Christian users to “bad associations.” (1 Cor. 15:33) The Society has received reports that such so-called private networks have been used not only to speculate regarding spiritual matters but also to give bad advice, spread gossip and false information, plant negative ideas, raise questions and doubts that subvert the faith of some, and disseminate private interpretations of Scripture. On the surface, some information may appear to be interesting and informative, and yet it may be laced with poisonous elements. Christians look to “the faithful and discreet slave” for timely spiritual food and for clarifications. (See *The Watchtower* of July 1,

1994, pages 9-11.) A Christian has the serious responsibility to safeguard his faith against all corrupting influences and, basic to that, should always know with whom he is associating.—Matt. 24:45-47; 2 John 10, 11.

¹⁰ The same *Watchtower* article emphasized the importance of respecting copyright laws. Most companies that prepare and sell computer programs copyright these, and they provide a license outlining how the programs can legally be used. The license usually says that the owner cannot give to others copies of the program; in fact, international copyright law makes it illegal to do so. Many greedy people have no scruples about breaking the law. Christians, though, should be conscientious in legal matters, rendering to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.—Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1.

¹¹ Some large firms sell computers containing preinstalled and licensed programs. However, certain computer stores do not provide licenses because the programs they preinstall are illegal copies, meaning that the purchaser violates the law in using the programs. Related to this, Christians should avoid putting onto, or downloading from, electronic bulletin boards material that is copyrighted (as are the Society's publications) and that is being copied without legal permission from the owners.—Heb. 13:18.

¹² The value of any application of technology must be weighed against the potential dangers inherent in its use. Just as television can be used to good advantage, the unwholesome effect it is having on mankind today has caused even worldly sources to express serious concern. Computer networks extend worldwide and can bring unlimited valuable information into the home or workplace. They offer much-needed services to businesses and organizations as well as to individuals who need to keep pace with personal or business interests in the fast-moving society in which we live. At the same time, computer networks are plagued with problems such as pornography, divisive hate propaganda, and detailed information on how to perform vile and wicked deeds.

¹³ There are many important reasons, therefore, why a Christian must maintain a balanced view of computer technology. Many individuals are enjoying the *New World Translation*, *Insight* volumes, and *Get-Verse* program, which the Society has made available on computer diskettes. Others have been benefited by using the Society issued *Watchtower Library* on CD-ROM, which incorporates additional research capabilities. While recognizing the value of certain technology, a person who uses such modern technology for beneficial purposes should also be on guard to protect himself and others from any negative aspects. We need to exercise balance so that even the harmless use of technology does not consume an inordinate amount of our dedicated time or distract us from our primary work and goals.—Matt. 6:22; 28:19, 20.

Watch out for the Internet and anything critical of our interpretation of scripture. The search for

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knowledge can get you in trouble (with us)!

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