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SONG 72

Making Known the
Kingdom Truth

PREVIEW

This article will examine how Jesus helped people to become his disciples and how we can imitate him. We will also discuss some features of the new book *Enjoy Life Forever!* It is designed to help our Bible students to progress to baptism.

Help Your Bible Students to Become Baptized Disciples

“Let each one of you be baptized.”—ACTS 2:38.

A LARGE crowd made up of men and women from many countries and speaking a number of languages had gathered. Something remarkable happened that day. A group of ordinary Jews could speak in the visitors’ native languages! As surprising as that was, *what* those Jews were saying to them and what the apostle Peter said to all was more remarkable. It included the message that they could be saved by exercising faith in Jesus Christ. The crowd was deeply affected by that message. The people were so moved, in fact, that they asked: “What should we do?” In reply, Peter said: “Let each one of you be baptized.”—Acts 2:37, 38.

² What happened next was exceptional. Some 3,000 individuals got baptized on that day, becoming disciples of Christ. This was the beginning of the great disciple-making work that Jesus commanded his followers to do. That work has extended to the 21st century. In our day, we cannot help someone to the point of baptism in just a few hours. It may take months or even a year or more for a student to reach that goal. Disciple-making takes work, as you well know if you are currently studying the Bible with someone. In this article, we will examine what you can do to help your Bible student become a baptized disciple.

1. What was a large crowd in the first century told to do?
2. What will we examine in this article? (See cover picture.)

HELP YOUR BIBLE STUDENT TO APPLY WHAT HE IS LEARNING

³ Before getting baptized, a Bible student must put into practice what the Bible teaches. **(Read Matthew 28:19, 20.)** When a student applies what he learns, he becomes like the “discreet man” in Jesus’ illustration who dug down deep to build his house on solid rock. (Matt. 7:24, 25; Luke 6:47, 48) How can we help a student to apply what he learns? Let us consider three suggestions.

⁴ **Help your student to set goals.** Why should you do that? Consider this illustration: If you were going to take a long road trip, you might include interesting

3. As indicated at Matthew 28:19, 20, what must a student do to progress to baptism?

4. How can we help a student to work steadily toward baptism? (See also the box “Help Your Student to Set Goals and Reach Them.”)

stops along the way. Thus the distance to your destination would seem less overwhelming. Likewise, when a Bible student sets and reaches short-term goals, he will likely realize that the goal of baptism is within his reach. Use the “Goal” feature in the *Enjoy Life Forever!* book to help your student make progress. At the end of each lesson, discuss how the goal relates to what your student has just learned. If you have a different goal in mind for your student, write it in the space labeled “Other.” Regularly use this portion of the study to review with your student both his short-term and his long-term goals.

⁵ **Help your student to make lifestyle changes. (Read Mark 10:17-22.)** Jesus knew that it would be difficult for a rich

5. As recorded at Mark 10:17-22, what did Jesus tell a rich man to do, and why?

Help Your Student to Set Goals and Reach Them

1. Discuss possible goals with your student
2. Help him with a plan to reach his goals
3. Regularly commend him for his progress



man to sell all his belongings. (Mark 10: 23) Yet, Jesus told the man to make this big change in his lifestyle. Why? Because Jesus felt love for him. At times, we may hold back from encouraging a student to apply what he is learning because we feel that he is not ready to make a needed change. It may take time for people to strip off old habits and put on the new personality. (Col. 3:9, 10) But the sooner you openly discuss the issue, the sooner the student can begin to change. By having that discussion, you show that you care about him.—Ps. 141:5; Prov. 27:17.

⁶ A viewpoint question is one with which we ask a student for his opinion or thoughts on a subject. Use such a question to determine what your student understands and believes. If you do this regularly, you will find it easier to discuss sensitive topics with him in the future. The *Enjoy Life Forever!* book contains many viewpoint questions. For example, lesson 04 asks: “How do you think Jehovah feels when you use his name?” Lesson 09 asks: “What are some things you would like to pray about?” At first, your student may need time to think about how to answer viewpoint questions. You can help by training him to reason on related scriptures as well as on the artwork.

⁷ Once your student understands what he needs to do, use real-life experiences to encourage him to do it. For example, if your student struggles to attend meetings, you could show him the video *Jehovah Cared for Me* featured in the “Explore” section of lesson 14. In many of the les-

sons in the *Enjoy Life Forever!* book, you will find such experiences in either the “Dig Deeper” or the “Explore” section.* Be careful not to compare your student with someone else by saying, “If he can do it, you can do it too.” Let the student come to that conclusion himself. Instead, isolate key points that helped the person in the video to apply Bible teachings. Perhaps you can point out a key scripture or something practical that was done. Whenever possible, emphasize how Jehovah helped that person.

⁸ **Help your student come to love Jehovah.** How? Look for opportunities to draw attention to Jehovah’s qualities. Help your student to view Jehovah as a happy God who supports those who love him. (1 Tim. 1:11; Heb. 11:6) Show the student that he will benefit by applying the information, and explain that this is a reflection of Jehovah’s love for him. (Isa. 48:17, 18) Your student will be more motivated to make any needed changes as his love for Jehovah deepens.—1 John 5:3.

INTRODUCE YOUR STUDENT TO FELLOW WORSHIPPERS

⁹ To progress to baptism, a Bible student will need to make sacrifices. Like the rich man mentioned earlier, some

* You can also find real-life experiences in (1) the *Research Guide for Jehovah’s Witnesses* under the subject “The Bible,” then “Practical Value,” and then “‘The Bible Changes Lives’ (Watchtower series)” or in (2) the *JW Library*® media section under “Interviews and Experiences.”

8. How can we help our student come to love Jehovah?

9. In line with Mark 10:29, 30, what can help a person to make sacrifices to become a baptized disciple?

6. Why should we use viewpoint questions?

7. How can we use real-life experiences effectively?



As you bring different publishers with you to a Bible study, the student will find it more appealing to attend meetings
(See paragraph 12)

students may need to sacrifice material things. If their employment is not in harmony with Bible principles, they may even have to make a change. Many may have to leave behind friends who do not love Jehovah. Others may be abandoned by family members who dislike Jehovah's Witnesses. Jesus acknowledged that it may be difficult for some people to make such sacrifices. But he promised that those who follow him will not be disappointed. They will be richly rewarded with a loving spiritual family. **(Read Mark 10:29, 30.)** How can you help your Bible student to benefit from this beautiful gift?

¹⁰ ***Develop a friendship with your student.*** It is important for you to show your student that you care about him. Why? Note a comment from Manuel, who lives in Mexico. Recalling when he

was a Bible student, he says: "Before every study session, my teacher would ask me how I was doing. He helped me relax and allowed me to open up about other matters. I could feel that he really cared about me."

¹¹ Spend time with your students, as Jesus spent time with his followers. (John 3:22) If appropriate, invite your progressive Bible student to your home to enjoy a cup of coffee or a meal or to watch one of our monthly broadcasts. Your student might especially appreciate such an invitation during holiday seasons when he may be feeling lonely. "I think I learned as much about Jehovah from spending time with my teacher as I did during our study," says Kazibwe, who lives in Uganda. "I saw how much Jehovah cares for his people and how

11. How might our students benefit from spending time with us?

10. What do you learn from Manuel's experience?

happy they are. That's what I wanted in my life."

¹² ***Invite different publishers to the Bible study.*** At times, we may feel that it is easier to go on our own or to bring the same publisher with us. While it may be more convenient to do so, our Bible student will likely benefit if, over time, we bring a variety of publishers. "Each publisher who came to my study would explain things in a unique way," says Dmitrii, who lives in Moldova. "That helped me to look at the material from different angles. I was also less shy when I attended my first meeting, since I had already met many of the brothers and sisters."

¹³ ***Help your student to attend congregation meetings.*** Why? Because Jehovah commands his worshippers to meet together; it is part of our worship. (Heb. 10:24, 25) In addition, our brothers and sisters are our spiritual family. When we are at the meetings with them, it is as if we were together at home sharing a fine meal. When you help your Bible student to attend meetings, you help him to take one of the most important steps toward baptism. But it may be a difficult step for him to take. How can the publication *Enjoy Life Forever!* help your student to overcome any challenges he may face?

¹⁴ Use lesson 10 of the *Enjoy Life Forever!* book to help you motivate your student. Experienced publishers who were asked to test this lesson before the book

was released had great success in helping their students to attend the meetings. Of course, do not wait until lesson 10 to invite your Bible student to our meetings. Invite him as soon as possible and continue to do so regularly. Different Bible students face different obstacles. So pay attention to your student's needs, and see if you can offer practical help. Do not be discouraged if it takes some time before he attends. Be patient but persistent.

HELP YOUR BIBLE STUDENT TO OVERCOME HIS FEARS

¹⁵ Do you remember feeling a bit afraid of becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses? Perhaps you felt that you would never be able to preach publicly. Or maybe you feared that your family or friends might oppose you. If so, you can sympathize with your Bible student. Jesus acknowledged that such fears are possible. However, he urged his followers not to let fear stop them from serving Jehovah. (Matt. 10:16, 17, 27, 28) How did Jesus help his followers to overcome their fears? And how can you follow his example?

¹⁶ ***Progressively train your student to share his faith.*** Jesus' disciples may have felt nervous when he sent them out to preach. But Jesus helped them by telling them where to preach and what their message was to be. (Matt. 10:5-7) How can you imitate Jesus? Help your student to see where he can preach. For example, ask him if he knows someone who

12. Why should we bring different publishers to a Bible study?

13. Why must we help our student to attend meetings?

14. How can we motivate our student to attend meetings?

15. What fears may our student have?

16. How can we train our student to share his faith?

could benefit from learning a specific Bible truth. Then help him to prepare what to say by showing him a simple way to share that truth. When appropriate, you can use as a practice session the features “Some People Say” and “Someone May Ask,” found in the *Enjoy Life Forever!* book. When you do, focus on training your student to use the Bible to give simple and tactful answers.

¹⁷ Help your student to trust in Jehovah. Jesus assured his disciples that Jehovah would help them because He loved them. **(Read Matthew 10:19, 20, 29-31.)** Remind your student that Jehovah will help him too. You can help him to rely on Jehovah by praying with him about his goals. “My teacher often mentioned my goals in his prayers,” says Franciszek, who lives in Poland. “When I

17. How can we use Matthew 10:19, 20, 29-31 as we help our student to trust in Jehovah?

saw how Jehovah answered my teacher’s prayers, I quickly started to pray. I felt Jehovah’s help when I needed to have days off from my new job to attend the meetings and the convention.”

¹⁸ Jehovah cares deeply about our Bible students. He appreciates how hard Christian teachers work to help people draw closer to him, and he loves them for it. (Isa. 52:7) If you are not currently conducting a Bible study, you can still help Bible students to progress toward baptism by accompanying other publishers on their studies.

18. How does Jehovah feel about the work that Christian teachers do?

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 5: A brother, accompanied by his wife, studies with a young man. At other times, various brothers sit in on the study.

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR BIBLE STUDENT TO . . .

- apply what he is learning?
- get to know fellow worshippers?
- overcome his fears?

SONG 28

Gaining Jehovah's
Friendship

PREVIEW

Do you sometimes fight feelings of loneliness? If so, be assured that Jehovah is keenly aware of your struggle and that he is willing to provide the support you need. In this article, we will discuss what you can do to cope with feelings of loneliness. We will also learn how you can encourage fellow worshippers who feel lonely.

With Jehovah, You Are Never Alone

“Jehovah is near to all those calling on him.”—PS. 145:18.

MOST of us feel lonely at times. For some, these feelings soon pass. For others, the loneliness may linger. We may feel lonely even when we are surrounded by people. Some struggle to fit into a new congregation. Others come from a close-knit family, but they suffer from loneliness when they move far away from their relatives. Still others deeply miss the companionship of a loved one who has passed away. And some Christians, especially those who have recently learned the truth, feel isolated when they face rejection or persecution from unbelieving family members and former friends.

² Jehovah knows and understands everything about us. When we are feeling lonely, he is aware of that, and he wants to help us overcome those feelings. How does Jehovah help us? What can we do to help ourselves? And how can we help others in our congregation who feel lonely? Let us consider the answers to these questions.

JEHOVAH TAKES NOTE

³ Jehovah is keenly interested in the welfare of all his worshippers. He is near to each one of us, and he notices when we feel overwhelmed by discouraging feelings. (Ps. 145:18, 19) Consider how attentive Jehovah was to his prophet Elijah. That faithful man lived during a difficult time in Israel's history. Worshippers of Jehovah were be-

1. Why may servants of Jehovah sometimes feel alone?
2. What questions will we answer?
3. How did Jehovah show concern for Elijah?

ing severely persecuted, and Elijah was a special target of powerful enemies who opposed God. (1 Ki. 19:1, 2) What may also have troubled Elijah was the feeling that he was the only prophet left serving Jehovah. (1 Ki. 19:10) God quickly took note of Elijah. Jehovah sent an angel to reassure His prophet that he was not alone—that there were still many other God-fearing Israelites!—1 Ki. 19:5, 18.

⁴ Jehovah understands that when we choose to serve him, some of us have to give up a great deal. That may include the support of unbelieving relatives and former friends. Perhaps with a note of concern in his voice, the apostle Peter once asked Jesus: “We have left all things and followed you; what, then, will there be for us?” (Matt. 19:27) Jesus warmly reassured his disciples that they would gain a vast spiritual family. **(Read Mark 10:29, 30.)** And Jehovah,

4. How does Mark 10:29, 30 reflect Jehovah’s concern for his servants who may lack the support of others?

the Head of our spiritual family, promises that he will support those who want to serve him. (Ps. 9:10) Consider some practical things that you can do to receive Jehovah’s help when battling feelings of loneliness.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU FEEL ALONE

⁵ **Focus on how Jehovah is sustaining you.** (Ps. 55:22) This will help you to maintain a balanced view of your situation. A single sister named Carol,* who has no family in the truth, says: “Looking back and meditating on how Jehovah has supported me through trials really helps me feel that I’m not alone. And it reassures me that Jehovah will be there for me in the future.”

⁶ **Think about how Jehovah is helping**

* Some names have been changed.

5. What benefits come from focusing on how Jehovah is sustaining you?

6. How can 1 Peter 5:9, 10 encourage those who struggle with feelings of loneliness?



Jehovah sent an angel to reassure Elijah that he was not alone
(See paragraph 3)



Listening to audio recordings of the Bible and Bible-based publications may help those who are alone to feel less lonely
(See paragraph 8)

fellow believers who feel lonely. (Read 1 Peter 5:9, 10.) Hiroshi, a brother who for many years has been the only Witness in his family, says: “In the congregation, it is easy to see that no one has perfect circumstances. Knowing that we are all doing our best to serve Jehovah can encourage those of us who are alone in the truth.”

7 Maintain a good spiritual routine. This includes openly telling Jehovah how you feel. (1 Pet. 5:7) “One of the most important things that helped me to cope with my loneliness was praying fervently to Jehovah,” says Massiel. She is a young sister who felt isolated from her family when she took a stand for the

truth. “He was a real Father to me, and I prayed to him every day, many times a day, letting him know how I felt.”

8 Read God’s Word regularly, meditating on specific accounts that highlight Jehovah’s love for you. Bianca, a sister who has to endure discouraging comments from her family, explains: “Reading about and meditating on Bible accounts and life stories of Jehovah’s servants who have faced similar situations really helps me.” Some Christians memorize scriptures that are particularly comforting, such as Psalm 27:10 and Isaiah 41:10. Others find that listening to audio recordings of the study material helps them to feel less lonely when preparing for the meetings or doing their Bible reading.

9 Strive to attend meetings regularly. You will benefit from the encouraging program, and you can also get to know your brothers and sisters. (Heb. 10:24, 25) Massiel, quoted earlier, says: “Although I was very shy, I resolved to attend every single congregation meeting and to offer a comment. This helped me to feel part of the congregation.”

10 Build friendships with faithful Christians. Seek out friends in the congregation whom you can learn from, even those whose age or background is different from yours. The Bible reminds us that wisdom is “found among the aged.” (Job 12:12) Older ones can learn much

8. How does reading God’s Word and meditating on it help you?

9. How does attending meetings benefit you?

10. Why is it important to build friendships with faithful Christians?

7. How does prayer help you?

from faithful younger ones too. David was much younger than Jonathan, but that did not prevent them from enjoying a close friendship. (1 Sam. 18:1) David and Jonathan helped each other to serve Jehovah despite serious challenges. (1 Sam. 23:16-18) “Our brothers and sisters can really become our spiritual parents or siblings,” says Irina, a sister who is currently the only Witness in her family. “Jehovah can use them to fill our need.”

¹¹ Making new friends may not be easy, especially if you are shy. Ratna, a timid sister who learned the truth despite opposition, admits, “I had to accept the fact that I needed the help and support of my spiritual family.” It can be a challenge to share your feelings with someone else, but such open communication is the basis for a close friendship. Your friends want to encourage and support you, yet they need you to let them know how they can do so.

¹² One of the best ways to make friends is by sharing in the ministry with fellow Christians. Carol, quoted earlier, says: “I have gained many good friendships by spending time with sisters in the ministry and in other theocratic activities. Jehovah has supported me over the years by means of these friends.” Building friendships with faithful Christians is definitely worth the effort. Jehovah uses such friendships to help you battle distressing feelings, such as loneliness. —Prov. 17:17.

11. What must you do to build strong friendships?

12. How can the ministry help you to make good friends?

HELP OTHERS TO FEEL PART OF OUR FAMILY

¹³ All in the congregation have a responsibility to contribute to a loving and peaceful environment where no one feels completely alone. (John 13:35) What we do and say can really make a difference! Notice what one sister said: “When I learned the truth, the congregation became my family. I could not have become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses without their support.” What can you do to help those who are alone in the truth to feel that they are part of the congregation?

¹⁴ **Take the initiative to offer your friendship.** We can start by warmly welcoming new ones to the congregation. (Rom. 15:7) However, we want to offer more than just a friendly greeting. We want to build strong friendships over time. So take a warm and sincere interest in new ones. While respecting their privacy, try to understand what they may be going through. Some may have difficulty expressing their feelings, so be careful not to pressure them to talk. Rather, kindly draw them out with discreet questions and listen patiently to their answers. For example, you could ask how they came to know of the truth.

¹⁵ All in the congregation will grow spiritually when mature Christians, especially the elders, take an interest in

13. What responsibility do all in the congregation have?

14. What can you do to make friends with new ones?

15. How can mature Christians help others in the congregation?

Is there someone in your congregation who would especially appreciate your kindness and association? (See paragraphs 16-19)



them. Melissa, who was raised in the truth by her mother, says: “I can’t express how much I appreciate the brothers who have made themselves available to me as spiritual fathers over the years. Whenever I need to talk, I have someone to turn to.” Mauricio, a young brother who felt abandoned when his Bible teacher left the truth, relates: “The elders’ personal interest in me made a big difference. They regularly talked to me. They worked with me in the ministry, shared with me gems from their personal Bible study, and even played sports with me.” Both Melissa and Mauricio went on to serve in the full-time ministry.

¹⁶ **Help in practical ways.** (Gal. 6:10) “Often all you need is a simple act of kindness at the right time,” says Leo, who serves as a missionary in a land far away from his family. “I remember one day when I had a car accident. By

16-17. In what practical ways may we be able to help others?

the time I finally made it home, I was stressed out. But then a couple invited me over for a simple meal. I don’t remember what we ate, but I do remember that they kindly listened to me. In the end, I felt much better!”

¹⁷ We all enjoy theocratic events, such as assemblies and conventions, partly because we get to spend time with others, conversing about the program together. However, Carol, quoted earlier, says, “I find assemblies and conventions especially difficult.” Why? “Even though I am surrounded by hundreds or even thousands of brothers and sisters,” she says, “often they are all paired off with their families. For me, the feeling of being alone is particularly strong.” Others find it difficult to attend a convention or an assembly for the first time after losing their mate in death. Do you know of someone who faces such challenges? Why not extend an invitation to him to enjoy the next theocratic event together with your family?

¹⁸ ***Spend time together.*** Try to include different brothers and sisters in your social activities, especially those who may feel alone. We want to “open [our] hearts wide,” particularly toward such ones. **(Read 2 Corinthians 6:11-13.)** “It was always a treat when friends invited us to visit them and their families or to go on trips together,” recalls Melissa, quoted earlier. Is there someone in your congregation to whom you can extend hospitality?

¹⁹ There may be times when fellow Christians would especially appreciate our association. Some may find it difficult to be around unbelieving relatives during holidays. Others may find certain dates, such as the anniversary of the death of a loved one, very painful. When we offer to spend time with brothers and sisters who are experiencing such chal-

18. How can we apply 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 when we show hospitality?

19. When might spending time with fellow Christians be especially helpful?

lenges, we show them that we “genuinely care.”—Phil. 2:20.

²⁰ There are many reasons why a Christian could at times feel alone. Yet, we must never forget that Jehovah is fully aware of such feelings. He provides us with what we need, often by means of our fellow Christians. **(Read Matthew 12:48-50.)** In turn, we show Jehovah our appreciation for his loving arrangement when we do our best to support our spiritual family. No matter how we may sometimes feel, we are never alone because Jehovah is always by our side!

20. How can Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 12:48-50 help us when we feel lonely?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 10:** A brother whose wife has died benefits from listening to audio recordings of the Bible and study material. **Page 12:** A brother and his daughter visit an older brother in the congregation and show kindness toward him.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ■ How do we know that Jehovah takes note of our feelings? | ■ What can we do when we struggle with feelings of loneliness? | ■ How can we help fellow Christians to feel part of the congregation? |
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SONG 36

We Guard Our Hearts

PREVIEW

Satan is like a skilled hunter. He tries to trap us, no matter how long we have been serving Jehovah. In this article, we will learn how Satan tries to use pride and greed to destroy our relationship with God. We will also learn from the examples of some who have been trapped by pride and greed, and we will see how we can avoid those snares.

You Can Escape From Satan's Snares!

“Escape from the snare of the Devil.”—2 TIM. 2:26.

A HUNTER has but one goal—that of capturing or killing his prey. He may use a variety of snares or traps, even as noted by one of Job’s false comforters. (Job 18:8-10) How might a hunter lure an animal into his snare? He studies the animal. Where does it go? What is it interested in? What will catch it by surprise? Satan is like that hunter. He studies us. He notices where we go and what we are interested in. Then he sets a snare that he hopes will catch us unawares. Still, the Bible assures us that if we are caught, we may be able to escape. It also teaches us how to avoid those snares altogether.

² Two of Satan’s most effective snares are **pride** and **greed**.^{*} For thousands of years, Satan has successfully used these undesirable traits. He is like a birdcatcher who lures his prey into a trap or who ensnares it in a net. (Ps. 91:3) But we do not have to be caught by Satan. Why not? Because Jehovah has revealed to us the tactics that Satan uses.—2 Cor. 2:11.

³ One of the ways in which Jehovah warns us about pride and greed is by encouraging us to learn from real-life experiences. Note in the examples we will consider

^{*} **EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED:** This article focuses on improper **pride**, the feeling that one person is better than another, and on **greed**, the excessive desire to have more money, power, sex, or other such things.

1. Why can we compare Satan to a hunter?
2. What are two of Satan’s most effective snares?
3. Why has Jehovah included certain examples in the Bible?

that Satan was able to ensnare even mature servants of Jehovah. Does this mean that we are doomed to fail? Not at all. Jehovah included these examples in the Bible as “a warning to us.” (1 Cor. 10: 11) He knows that we can learn from warning examples and thus avoid or escape from the Devil’s snares.

THE SNARE OF PRIDE

⁴ Satan wants us to develop an unbalanced sense of pride. He knows that if we allow improper pride to dominate us, we will become like him and lose out on gaining everlasting life. (Prov. 16:18) Accordingly, the apostle Paul warned that a person might “get puffed up with pride and fall into the judgment passed on the Devil.” (1 Tim. 3:6, 7) That could happen to any one of us, whether we are new in the truth or we have been serving Jehovah for many years.

4. To what will pride lead?

⁵ Pride is a form of selfishness. Satan tries to get us to be selfish, to focus more on ourselves than on Jehovah, especially when we face a challenge. For example, have you been falsely accused? Or have you been treated unjustly? Satan would love to see you blame Jehovah or your brothers. And the Devil wants you to think that the only remedy is to do things your own way rather than to follow the guidance Jehovah gives you in his Word.—**Read Ecclesiastes 7:16, 20.**

⁶ Consider the experience of a sister in the Netherlands who became irritated by the imperfections of others. She decided that she could not tolerate the situation anymore. “I felt very lonely and unable to change my feelings,” she says. “I told my husband that we had

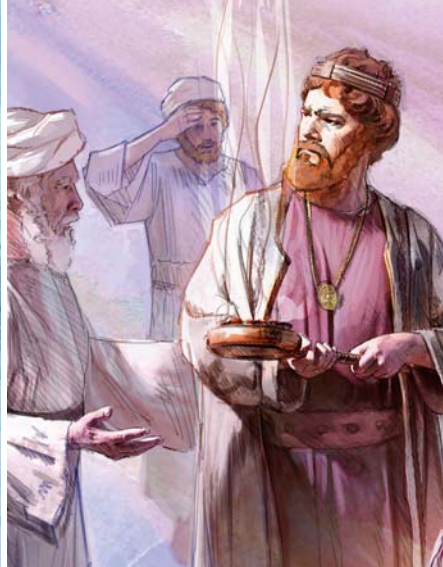
5. As indicated at Ecclesiastes 7:16, 20, how might a person show pride?

6. What can you learn from the experience of a sister in the Netherlands?



Pride and greed have proved
to be two of Satan's most
effective snares
(See paragraph 2)





We can learn from warning examples and thus avoid or escape from the Devil's snares (See paragraph 3)

to move to a different congregation.” Then she watched the March 2016 JW Broadcasting® program. That program gave some suggestions on how to deal with the imperfections of others. The sister relates: “I saw that I had to look honestly and humbly at my own mistakes rather than try to change the brothers and sisters in the congregation. The program helped me to focus on Jehovah and his sovereignty.” Do you see the point? When you face a trial, stay focused on Jehovah. Beg him to help you look at others from his perspective. Your heavenly Father sees their mistakes; yet, he is willing to forgive them. He wants you to do the same.—1 John 4:20.

⁷ Pride led King Uzziah of Judah to resist counsel and to act presumptuously. Uzziah was a very capable man. He was successful in military campaigns, in construction projects, and in agricultural developments. “The true God made him prosper.” (2 Chron. 26:3-7, 10) “However, as soon as he was strong, his heart

became haughty to his own ruin,” the Bible says. Jehovah had earlier commanded that only the priests were allowed to offer incense at the temple. But King Uzziah presumptuously went into the temple to offer incense. Jehovah was not pleased and struck that proud man with leprosy. Uzziah remained a leper for the rest of his life.—2 Chron. 26:16-21.

⁸ Could pride lead us into a snare like the one that caught Uzziah? Consider the example of José. He was a very successful businessman who served as a respected congregation elder. He gave talks at assemblies and conventions, and circuit overseers consulted him for advice. “But I trusted in my own ability and in my experience,” he admits. “I had pushed Jehovah away. I thought that I was strong, so I didn’t listen to Jehovah’s warnings and counsel.” José committed a serious sin and was disfellowshipped. Several years ago, he was

7. What happened to King Uzziah?

8. In line with 1 Corinthians 4:6, 7, how can we avoid becoming proud?



reinstated. He now says: “Jehovah has taught me that the important thing is, not having a title, but doing what he asks of us.” Let us remember that any talents we have and any privileges we receive in the congregation are from Jehovah. **(Read 1 Corinthians 4:6, 7.)** If we are proud, Jehovah will not use us.

THE SNARE OF GREED

⁹ When we think of greed, Satan the Devil likely comes to mind. As one of Jehovah’s angels, Satan must have had many fine privileges. But he wanted more. He wanted the worship that only Jehovah rightly deserves. Satan wants us to become like him, so he tries to make us feel discontented with what we have. That sort of effort started when he approached Eve. Jehovah had lovingly provided Eve and her husband with an abundance of satisfying food to eat —“from every tree of the garden” except one. (Gen. 2:16) Still, Satan deceived Eve into thinking that she needed to eat

from the one tree that was forbidden. Eve failed to appreciate what she had; she wanted more. We know what that led to. Eve gave in to sin and eventually died.—Gen. 3:6, 19.

¹⁰ Greed led King David to forget what Jehovah had given him, including wealth, prominence, and victory over many of his enemies. David gratefully acknowledged that God’s gifts were “too numerous to recount!” (Ps. 40:5) But at one point, David forgot what Jehovah had given him. He was no longer content; he wanted more. Although David had several wives, he let an improper desire for another man’s wife develop in his heart. The woman was Bath-sheba, and her husband was Uriah the Hittite. David selfishly had sexual relations with Bath-sheba, and she became pregnant. As if the adultery were not bad enough, David arranged for Uriah to be killed! (2 Sam. 11:2-15) What was David thinking? Did he imagine that Jehovah could not see? That once faithful servant of Jehovah

9. What did greed cause both Satan and Eve to do?

10. How did greed become a snare for King David?

gave in to selfish greed and paid dearly for it. Happily, though, in time David admitted his error and repented. How thankful he was to have Jehovah's favor again!—2 Sam. 12:7-13.

¹¹ What do we learn from the example of David? We learn that we can fight greed if we remain thankful for all that Jehovah has given us. **(Read Ephesians 5:3, 4.)** We must be content with what we have. New Bible students are encouraged to think of one specific blessing and to thank Jehovah for it. If a person does that every day for a week, it will mean that he has prayed about seven different topics. (1 Thess. 5:18) Do you do something similar? If you meditate on all that Jehovah has done for you, it will help you to be thankful. And when you are thankful, you become content. When you are content, greed loses its grip on you.

¹² Greed led Judas Iscariot to become a despicable traitor. He did not start out that way though. (Luke 6:13, 16) Jesus chose him as an apostle. Judas was evidently capable and dependable, for he was in charge of the money box. Jesus and the apostles used those funds to care for their expenses in the preaching activity. In a sense, they were like donations to the worldwide work today. But at some point, Judas began to steal, despite having heard Jesus' repeated warnings about greed. (Mark 7:22, 23; Luke 11:39; 12:15) Judas ignored those warnings.

¹³ Judas' greed became evident during an incident that happened not long before Jesus was put to death. Jesus and his disciples, including Mary and her sister, Martha, were guests of Simon the leper. During the meal, Mary got up and poured on Jesus' head perfumed oil that cost a lot of money. Judas and the other disciples got very upset. The other disciples may have felt that the money could be better used in the ministry. But Judas' motive was different. He "was a thief," and he wanted to steal money from the box. Later, greed moved Judas to betray Jesus for the price of a slave. —John 12:2-6; Matt. 26:6-16; Luke 22:3-6.

¹⁴ Jesus reminded his followers of this basic truth: "You cannot be slaves to God and to Riches." **(Read Luke 16:13.)** That is still true. Consider how one couple in Romania allowed Jesus' words to influence them. They were offered a temporary job in a more prosperous country. "We had a large bank loan to repay, so at first we thought that this job was a blessing from Jehovah," they admit. However, there was a catch. The job would interfere with their service to Jehovah. After reading the article "Maintain Loyalty With a Unified Heart" in *The Watchtower* of August 15, 2008, they made their decision. They relate: "If earning more money was our motive for working in another country, we would be putting our relationship with Jehovah in second place. We were convinced

11. According to Ephesians 5:3, 4, what can help us to fight greed?

12. What did greed lead Judas Iscariot to do?

13. When did Judas' greed become evident?

14. How did one couple apply the lesson found at Luke 16:13?

that our spirituality would suffer.” So they declined the offer. What happened? The husband found a job in his home country that met their needs. The wife says: “Jehovah’s hand is never short.” This couple are happy they made Jehovah their Master rather than money.

AVOID SATAN’S SNARES

¹⁵ What if we discover that we have given in to pride or greed? We can escape! Paul said that those who “have been caught alive by” the Devil can still escape from the snare. (2 Tim. 2:26) After all, David listened to Nathan’s reproof, repented of his greed, and repaired his friendship with Jehovah. Never forget, Jehovah is stronger than Satan. So if we accept Jehovah’s help, we can escape from any snare or trap that the Devil has set.

¹⁶ Of course, rather than have to escape from Satan’s snares or traps, we should avoid them altogether. We can do

15. Why can we be sure that it is possible to escape from Satan’s snares?

16. What will help us to avoid Satan’s snares?

so only with God’s help. But we must not be complacent! Even longtime servants of Jehovah have become proud or greedy. So beg Jehovah daily to help you recognize if those ugly qualities have begun to influence your thinking and actions. (Ps. 139:23, 24) Never allow them to get a grip on you!

¹⁷ For thousands of years, Satan has been the hunter. But soon he will be bound and eventually destroyed. (Rev. 20:1-3, 10) We long for that day. Until then, stay alert to Satan’s snares. Work hard to prevent pride or greed from dominating you. Be determined to “oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you.”—Jas. 4:7.

17. What will soon happen to our adversary, the Devil?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 15:** A brother pridefully rejects wise direction. A sister who has many things is drawn to acquiring even more.

Page 16: Pride affected a spirit son of God and King Uzziah. **Page 17:** Greed was behind Eve’s eating from the forbidden tree, David’s committing adultery with Bath-sheba, and Judas’ stealing money.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ■ What lessons about pride can we learn from King Uzziah’s example? | ■ What lessons about greed can we learn from the examples of King David and Judas Iscariot? | ■ Why can we be certain that we can escape from Satan’s snares? |
|---|---|---|

SONG 113

Our Possession of Peace

PREVIEW

Because of imperfection, we may do or say things that hurt our brothers and sisters. How do we react? Are we eager to repair our relationship? Are we quick to apologize? Or do we conclude that if they are hurt, it is their problem, not ours? Or what if we often take offense at the words or actions of others? Do we justify our reaction by saying that this is just who we are—this is our personality? Or do we see our reaction as a weakness that we need to overcome?

Do Not Stumble “These Little Ones”

“Do not despise one of these little ones.”—MATT. 18:10.

JEHOVAH has drawn each of us to him. (John 6:44) Think of what that means. As Jehovah carefully examined all the billions of people in this world, he saw something precious in you—a sincere heart that could grow to love him. (1 Chron. 28:9) Jehovah knows you, understands you, and loves you. How reassuring that is!

² Jehovah cares deeply about you, and he also cares about all your Christian brothers and sisters. To illustrate this point, Jesus compared Jehovah to a shepherd. If 1 sheep out of 100 strays from the flock, what will the shepherd do? He will “leave the 99 on the mountains and set out on a search for the one that is straying.” When the shepherd finds the sheep, he will not scold it for straying. He will rejoice. The point? Every sheep is important to Jehovah. Jesus said: “It is not a desirable thing to my Father who is in heaven for **even one** of these little ones to perish.”—Matt. 18:12-14.

³ We would certainly never want to be a source of discouragement to any of our brothers or sisters. How can we avoid stumbling others? And what can we do if someone hurts us? We will answer those questions in this article. But first, let us learn more about “these little ones” referred to in Matthew chapter 18.

1. What has Jehovah done for each of us?
2. How did Jesus illustrate Jehovah’s interest in each of His sheep?
3. What will we discuss in this article?

WHO ARE “THESE LITTLE ONES”?

4 “These little ones” are Jesus’ disciples of all ages. Regardless of their physical age, they are “as young children” in the sense that they are willing to be taught by Jesus. (Matt. 18:3) Although they may come from different backgrounds and cultures and have different viewpoints and personalities, they all exercise faith in Christ. He, in turn, loves them very much.—Matt. 18:6; John 1:12.

5 All “these little ones” are precious to Jehovah. To understand how he feels, consider how we feel about children. They are precious to us. We want to protect them because they lack the strength, experience, and wisdom of adults. In fact, while we do not like to see anyone get hurt, we get especially upset—even angry—when someone hurts a child. In the same way, Jehovah wants to protect us. He gets upset—even angry—when someone stumbles or hurts one of His people!—Isa. 63:9; Mark 9:42.

6 In what other way are Jesus’ disciples like “little ones”? Well, whom does the world consider important? The rich, the famous, and the powerful. In contrast, Jesus’ disciples seem to be unimportant, insignificant “little ones.” (**Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.**) But Jehovah does not view them that way.

7 Jehovah loves all his servants, wheth-

er they have been serving him for many years or they are new in the truth. All our brothers and sisters are important to Jehovah, so they should also be important to us. We want to “have love for the **whole** association of brothers,” not just some of them. (1 Pet. 2:17) We should be willing to do whatever we can to protect and care for them. If we learn that we have hurt or offended someone, we should not simply brush it off, concluding that the person is too sensitive and needs to get over it. Why might some become offended? Perhaps because of their background, some brothers and sisters have a very low opinion of themselves. Others are new in the truth; they have not yet learned how to deal with people’s imperfections. Whatever the case, we should do what we can to make things right. Additionally, though, a person who is often offended by others needs to recognize that this is an undesirable personality trait that he needs to work on. He needs to do that for his own peace of mind and for the well-being of others.

CONSIDER OTHERS AS SUPERIOR

8 What prompted Jesus to talk about “these little ones”? His disciples had asked him a question: “Who really is greatest in the Kingdom of the heavens?” (Matt. 18:1) Many Jews at that time viewed position and rank as very important. One scholar says: “Men lived and died in quest of honor, reputation, fame, approval, and respect.”

8. What popular attitude affected Jesus’ disciples?

4. Who are “these little ones”?

5. How does Jehovah feel when someone stumbles or hurts one of His people?

6. According to 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, how does the world view Jesus’ disciples?

7. How does Jehovah want us to feel about our brothers and sisters?

⁹ Jesus knew that his disciples would have to work hard to root out from their heart the spirit of competition that was entrenched in Jewish culture. He told them: “Let the one who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the one taking the lead as the one ministering.” (Luke 22:26) We conduct ourselves as “the youngest” when we “consider others superior” to us. (Phil. 2:3) The more we cultivate that attitude, the less likely we are to stumble others.

¹⁰ All our brothers and sisters are superior to us in one way or another. It is not hard to see this when we focus on their positive qualities. We should take to heart the counsel that the apostle Paul gave to the Corinthians: “Who makes you different from another? Indeed, what do you have that you did not receive? If, in fact, you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not receive it?” (1 Cor. 4:7) We should beware of any temptation to draw attention to ourselves or to think of ourselves as superior to others. If a brother gives stimulating talks or a sister is gifted at starting Bible studies, he or she should be quick to give the credit to Jehovah.

FORGIVE “FROM YOUR HEART”

¹¹ Soon after Jesus warned his followers not to stumble others, he gave an illustration about a king and his slave. The king canceled a large debt that the slave could never repay. Later, that same slave was unwilling to cancel the much smaller

debt of his fellow slave. In the end, the king threw that merciless slave into prison. The lesson? Jesus said: “My heavenly Father will also deal with you in the same way if each of you does not forgive your brother from your heart.”—Matt. 18:21-35.

¹² The slave’s actions harmed not only him but others too. First, he heartlessly harmed his fellow slave by having him “thrown into prison until he could pay back what he owed.” Second, he hurt other slaves who observed what he had done. When his “fellow slaves saw what had happened, they became greatly distressed.” Similarly, our actions affect others. If someone wrongs us and we refuse to forgive him, what can happen? First, we hurt him by denying him our forgiveness, attention, and affection. Second, we make others in the congregation uncomfortable when they notice that we are not at peace with that person.

¹³ When we forgive our brothers and sisters, we benefit ourselves and others. That was the experience of one pioneer whom we will call Crystal. She was hurt by a sister in the congregation. Crystal recalls: “Her unloving words would sometimes cut me like a knife. In the ministry, I didn’t even want to be put in the same car group with her. I started to lose my zeal and my joy.” Crystal felt that she had good reason for being upset. But she did not give in to resentment or self-pity. She humbly applied the Scriptural counsel found in the arti-

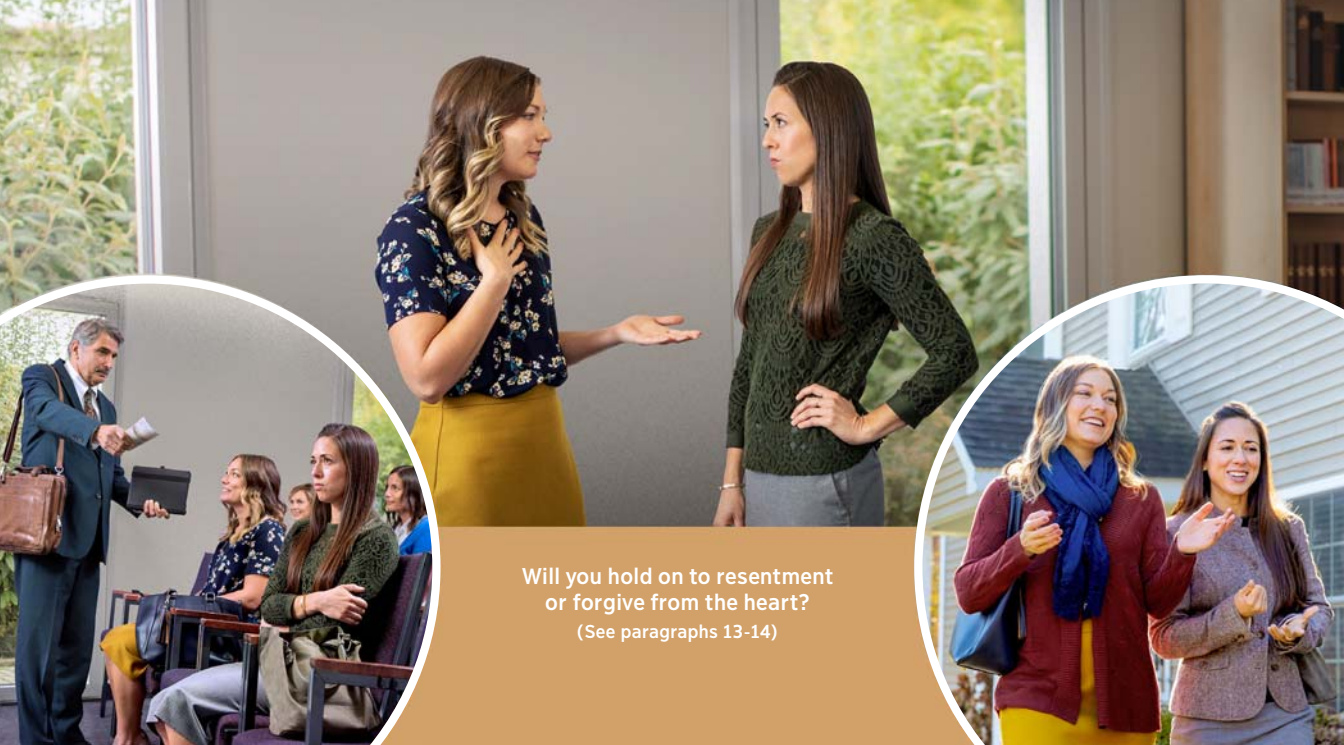
9. What did Jesus’ disciples have to do?

10. What counsel of Paul should we take to heart?

11. What was the point of Jesus’ illustration about a king and his slave?

12. If we refuse to forgive, how do we hurt others?

13. What do you learn from the experience of one pioneer?



Will you hold on to resentment
or forgive from the heart?
(See paragraphs 13-14)

cle “Forgive From Your Heart” in *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1999. She forgave her sister. Crystal says: “I now realize that we’re all striving to put on the new personality and that Jehovah forgives us freely and daily. I feel as if the weight of the world were lifted off my shoulders. I have regained my joy.”

¹⁴ We know that we should forgive; that is the right thing to do. But we may still struggle to do so. The apostle Peter may have felt that way at times. **(Read Matthew 18:21, 22.)** What can help? First, meditate on how much Jehovah has forgiven you. (Matt. 18:32, 33) We do not deserve his forgiveness, but he offers it freely. (Ps. 103:8-10) At the same time, “we are also under obligation to love one another.” So forgiveness is

14. According to Matthew 18:21, 22, what struggle did the apostle Peter seem to have and what do you learn from Jesus’ reply?

not optional. We owe it to our brothers and sisters to forgive them. (1 John 4: 11) Second, meditate on what happens when we forgive. We may help the person who has wronged us, unify the congregation, protect our friendship with Jehovah, and remove a burden from our shoulders. (2 Cor. 2:7; Col. 3:14) Finally, pray to the One who asks us to forgive. Do not allow Satan to disrupt the peace you enjoy with your fellow worshippers. (Eph. 4:26, 27) We need Jehovah’s help if we are to avoid falling into Satan’s trap.

DO NOT LET YOURSELF BE STUMBLLED

¹⁵ What, though, if a fellow believer has acted in a way that is very troubling to

15. In line with Colossians 3:13, what can we do if we are troubled by the actions of a brother or a sister?

you? What should you do? Make every effort to maintain peace. Turn to Jehovah in earnest prayer. Ask him to bless the person who offended you and to help you see the good qualities in that person—the very qualities that Jehovah loves about him. (Luke 6:28) If you cannot overlook what your brother has done, consider how you should approach him. It is always best to assume that the brother would never intentionally hurt you. (Matt. 5:23, 24; 1 Cor. 13:7) When you speak to him, give him the benefit of the doubt. What if he does not want to make peace? “Continue putting up with” him. Do not give up on your brother. **(Read Colossians 3:13.)** Most important, never hold on to resentment, for that could harm your friendship with Jehovah. Never allow anything to stumble you. In doing so, you prove that you love Jehovah more than anything else.—Ps. 119:165.

¹⁶ We treasure the privilege of serving Jehovah unitedly as “one flock” under “one shepherd”! (John 10:16) The book *Organized to Do Jehovah’s Will*, page 165,

16. What responsibility does each of us have?

states: “Benefiting from that unity, you have the responsibility to help maintain it.” Thus, we need to “train ourselves to see our brothers and sisters as Jehovah sees them.” To Jehovah, we are all precious “little ones.” Is that how you view your brothers and sisters? Jehovah notices and values everything you do to help them and care for them.—Matt. 10:42.

¹⁷ We love our fellow worshippers. So we are “determined not to put a stumbling block or an obstacle before a brother.” (Rom. 14:13) We consider our brothers and sisters to be superior to us, and we want to forgive them from our heart. May we not allow ourselves to be stumbled by others. Rather, let us choose to “pursue the things making for peace and the things that build one another up.”—Rom. 14:19.

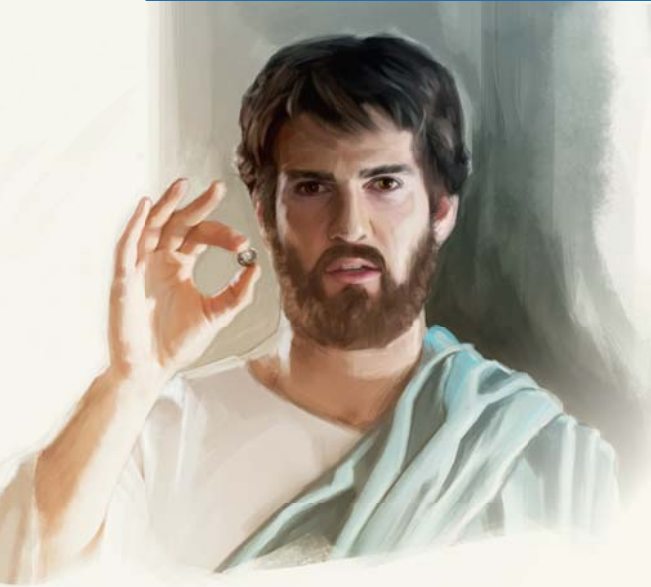
17. What are we determined to do?

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 23: A sister is upset with another sister in the congregation. After the two privately resolve the matter, they put it behind them and serve together happily.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ■ Who are “these little ones” referred to in Matthew chapter 18? | ■ How can we consider others as superior? | ■ If we struggle to forgive, what can we do? |
|--|---|--|

DID YOU KNOW?



In Jesus' day, what kinds of taxes did people have to pay?

FROM early times, the Israelites were accustomed to making payments to support true worship. But the matter of taxation became complicated and burdensome for the Jews in Jesus' day.

As one means to support worship at God's sanctuary, all adult Jews were to pay a half shekel (two drachmas). In the first century, that was used to care for the upkeep and sacrifices at the temple that Herod built. Some Jews asked Peter about Jesus' stand on that matter, and Christ did not oppose the tax. In fact, he directed Peter to get a coin to pay that tax.—Matt. 17:24-27.

God's people back then also were to tithe, which corresponded to giving one tenth of their crops or of their income. (Lev. 27:30-32; Num. 18:26-28) The religious leaders insisted that this tithe be scrupulously paid on every vegetable, even on "the mint and the dill and the cumin." Jesus did not criticize

tithing, but he exposed the hypocritical attitude of the scribes and Pharisees.—Matt. 23:23.

At that time, though, the Romans were ruling, and they levied a number of civil taxes. One was a tax on those who owned land, and they might pay that tax with money or goods. It is estimated that this was levied at a rate of from 20 to 25 percent. There was also a head tax for each Jew. It was about this tax that the Pharisees questioned Jesus. He summed up the proper position with the statement: "Pay back, therefore, Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God."—Matt. 22:15-22.

There was also a duty on merchandise that entered or exited a tariff district. That tax was collected at ports, bridges, crossroads, or entrances to towns or markets.

The overall tax burden for the people under Roman rule was excessively heavy. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, during the reign of Emperor Tiberius when Jesus was on earth, "Syria and Judæa, exhausted by their burdens, implored a reduction of tribute."

The burden was made heavier by the method of collecting those taxes. The right to do so was auctioned off. The highest bidders, who would make a profit off the receipts, contracted with others to do the actual collecting, making a profit for themselves. Zacchaeus appears to have had such collectors under him. (Luke 19:1, 2) Understandably, the people resented this and had a low opinion of those whom they had to deal with directly when paying taxes.



Taking Steps With Jehovah in Mind

AS TOLD BY DYAH YAZBEK

ONE sunny morning in 1984, I headed to work from our comfortable home in a residential area of Caracas, Venezuela. On my way, I was musing over a recent article in the *Watchtower* magazine. It was about how our neighbors view us. Looking at the nearby houses, I wondered: ‘Do my neighbors see me simply as a successful banker? Or do they see me as a minister of God who supports his family by working in a bank?’ Not pleased with what seemed to be the likely answer, I decided to take steps to do something about that.

I was born on May 19, 1940, in the town of Amioûn, Lebanon. A few years later, our family moved to the city of Tripoli, where I was raised in a loving, stable family who knew and loved Jehovah God. I was the youngest of five children, three girls and two boys. For my parents, earning a living was secondary. Our life centered on Bible study, Christian meetings, and helping others come to know God.

There were several anointed Christians in our congregation. One was Michel Aboud, who conducted what we called our book study. He had introduced Christian truth in Lebanon in the early 1920’s, having learned it in New York. I especially recall how respectful and helpful he was to two young graduates of Gilead School—Anne and Gwen Beavor. They became our good friends. Many decades later, I was thrilled to meet Anne in the United States. Some time afterward, I encountered Gwen, who had married Wilfred Gooch and was serving at Bethel at the branch office in London, England.

WITNESSING IN LEBANON

There were few Witnesses in Lebanon when I was a youth. But we enthusiastic-

ly shared with others what we knew from the Bible. We did that despite opposition from some of the religious leaders. Certain events stand out in my mind.

One day, my sister Sana and I were sharing the Bible's message in an apartment building. A priest showed up on the floor where we were speaking with the residents. Somebody must have called him. The priest started to insult my sister. He became violent and pushed Sana down the stairs, injuring her. Someone telephoned the police, who came and kindly saw to it that Sana was attended to. They took the priest to the police station, where they discovered that he was carrying a gun. The police chief asked him: "What are you anyway? A religious leader or a mob leader?"

Another occasion that I remember vividly was when our congregation rented a bus to take us to an isolated town where we could share the good news. We were having a pleasant time until the local priest heard what we were doing and gathered a mob. They harassed us, even throwing stones at us, and my father was hurt. I remember seeing him with his face all bloodied. He returned to the bus with my mother, and the rest of us anxiously followed. However, I will never forget that as my mother was cleaning my father up, she said: "Jehovah, please forgive them. They are not aware of their own actions."

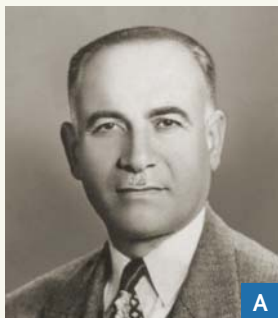
On yet another occasion, we went to visit relatives in our hometown. There we found a prominent religious leader, a bishop, at my grandfather's home. The bishop knew that my parents were Jehovah's Witnesses. He singled me out, though I was only six years old. "You," he said, "why are you not baptized?" I replied that I was still a child and that to get baptized I needed to know more about the Bible and to have strong faith. Not liking my answer, he told my grandfather that I had been disrespectful.

Such negative experiences were few, however. Generally, the Lebanese people are friendly and hospitable. Thus, we had many enjoyable Bible discussions and conducted a good number of Bible studies.

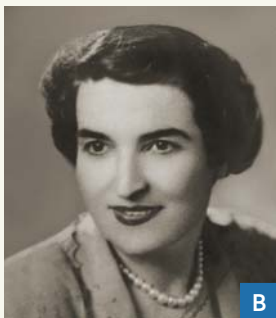
DECIDING TO MOVE TO ANOTHER LAND

While I was still in school, a young brother from Venezuela visited Lebanon. He attended meetings in our congregation and became acquainted with my sister Wafa. In time, they got married and went to live in Venezuela. In her letters, Wafa urged my father to move the whole family to Venezuela. She did so because she missed us very much. Eventually, she succeeded in getting us to move!

We arrived in Venezuela in 1953 and settled in Caracas, near the presidential palace. Being a youngster, I was excited to see the president pass by at times in his



A



B



C

- A. My father
- B. My mother
- C. Me in 1953 when my family moved to Venezuela

chauffeur-driven car. But it was not easy for my parents to adapt to the new country, language, culture, food, and climate. In fact, they were just beginning to “find their feet” when something terrible happened.

TRAGEDY STRIKES

My father started to feel sick. This seemed so strange to us, as he had been a strong, healthy person. We could not remember that he had ever been ill. Then he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, and he underwent surgery. Sadly, he died one week later.

It is hard to put into words how shattering that was for us, given our circumstances. I was just 13 years old. We were in shock and felt as if our world had crumbled. For some time, my mother found it difficult to face the fact that her husband was no longer there. However, we came to see that life must go on, and with Jehovah’s help we managed. When, at age 16, I graduated from high school in Caracas, I felt a keen desire to help support my family.

In the meantime, my sister Sana married Rubén Araujo, who had graduated from

Gilead School and had returned to Venezuela. They chose to move to New York. When the family decided that I would study at university, I could do so there and have somewhere to live. My sister and brother-in-law were very influential in my spiritual progress while I lived with them. Additionally, there were many mature brothers in our Brooklyn Spanish congregation. Two of them whom I came to know and appreciate were Milton Henschel and Frederick Franz; both of them served at Brooklyn Bethel.

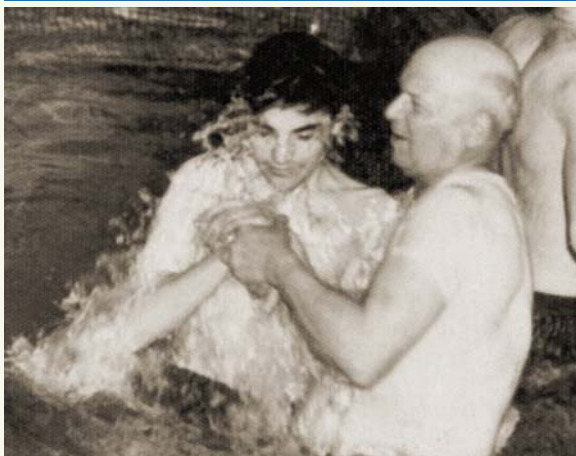
As my first year at university in New York was drawing to a close, I began to have doubts about what I was doing with my life. I had read and thought seriously about articles in the *Watchtower* magazine on the subject of Christians having meaningful goals. I saw how happy the pioneers and the Bethelites in our congregation were, and I longed to be like them. However, I was not yet a baptized Christian. Before long I realized the importance of dedicating my life to Jehovah. I did so and followed that with the key step of baptism on March 30, 1957.

IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Having taken that important step, I thought about another step that I wanted to take—that of entering the full-time ministry. This became increasingly attractive to me, but I could see that taking such a step was going to be difficult. How could I coordinate that service with my university schedule? Letters seemed to fly between New York and Venezuela as I explained to my mother and my siblings that my decision was to end my studies, return to Venezuela, and become a pioneer.



My sister Sana and her husband, Rubén, were very influential in my spiritual progress



My baptism in 1957

I returned to Caracas in June 1957. However, I could see that my family's circumstances were not good. They needed the support of another wage earner. How could I help? I was offered work in a bank, yet I so wanted to pioneer. After all, that was the reason for my return. I was determined to do both. For several years, I worked full-time in the bank and I served as a pioneer. I had never been so busy nor so happy!

Adding to my joy, I met and married Sylvia, a beautiful German sister who deeply loved Jehovah. She had moved to Venezuela with her parents. Eventually, we had two children, our son, Michel (Mike), and our daughter, Samira. I also assumed the responsibility of caring for my mother. She came to live with us. Though I had to end my pioneer service to care for my family obligations, I maintained the pioneer spirit. Sylvia and I auxiliary pioneered whenever we could during vacations.

ANOTHER MAJOR STEP

The children were still in school when I had the experience mentioned at the start of this article. I have to admit that my life was very comfortable, and I was viewed with respect in banking circles. Still, I mainly wanted to be viewed as a servant of

Jehovah. The thoughts I had that day did not leave me. So my wife and I sat down together and discussed our finances. If I ended my work at the bank, I would receive a lump sum payment. Because we had no debts, we figured that if we simplified our life, we would have enough money to keep us going for a good while.

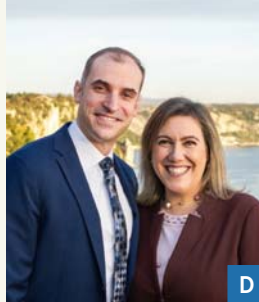
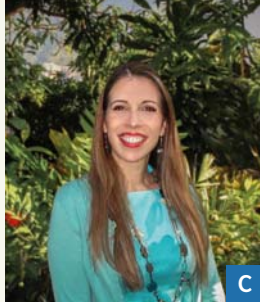
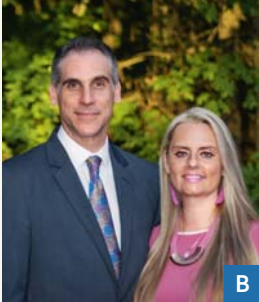
It was not easy to take that step, but my dear wife and my mother fully supported it. So once again I was going to join the ranks of full-time servants. What a thrill! The road ahead seemed clear. Before long, though, we received news that surprised us all.

A WELCOME SURPRISE!

One day our doctor confirmed that Sylvia was pregnant. What a surprise to both of us! That was a great joy; yet, I thought of the step I had taken—that of becoming a pioneer. How would this decision be affected? We very soon adjusted mentally and emotionally and began to look forward to having an additional member of the family. But what about my carefully laid plans?

Our third child, Gabriel, was a welcome surprise





A. With my wife, Sylvia, at the Venezuela branch

B. Our oldest son, Mike, with Monica

C. Our daughter, Samira

D. Our son Gabriel with Ambra

After discussing our goals, we decided to stick to our original plan. Our son Gabriel was born in April of 1985. Nevertheless, I resigned from the bank and began regular pioneering again in June 1985. In time, I was privileged to work with the Branch Committee. But the branch was not in Caracas, which meant my commuting a distance of about 50 miles (80 km) two or three days a week.

ANOTHER MOVE

The branch office was located in the town of La Victoria, so we decided as a family to move to La Victoria to be closer to Bethel. That was a big step for us. I cannot overstate my appreciation and admiration for my family. Their attitude was a great help. My sister Baha was willing to provide care for our mother. Mike was married, but Samira and Gabriel still lived at home. Hence, moving to La Victoria meant their leaving friends in Caracas. Also, dear Sylvia had to adapt to a small town instead of the bustling capital city. And all of us had to get used to living in a smaller house. Yes, much was involved in the step of moving from Caracas to La Victoria.

However, things changed again. Gabriel got married, and Samira was able to live

independently. Then Sylvia and I were invited to join the Bethel family in 2007, a privilege we enjoy to this day. Mike, our oldest son, serves as an elder and is able to pioneer along with his wife, Monica. Gabriel is an elder too, and he serves in Italy with his wife, Ambra. Samira, in addition to pioneering, assists as a remote volunteer at Bethel.

I WOULD DO THE SAME AGAIN

Yes, I have had a life full of significant steps. I have no regrets, though. I would make the same decisions again. I greatly appreciate the many spiritual assignments and privileges I have had in serving Jehovah. Over the years, I have come to see how vital it is to maintain a strong friendship with Jehovah. Whether the steps we need to take are small or large, he can provide the peace that “surpasses all understanding.” (Phil. 4:6, 7) Sylvia and I enjoy our sacred service at Bethel and feel that the steps we have taken in life have been blessed, steps taken with Jehovah in mind.

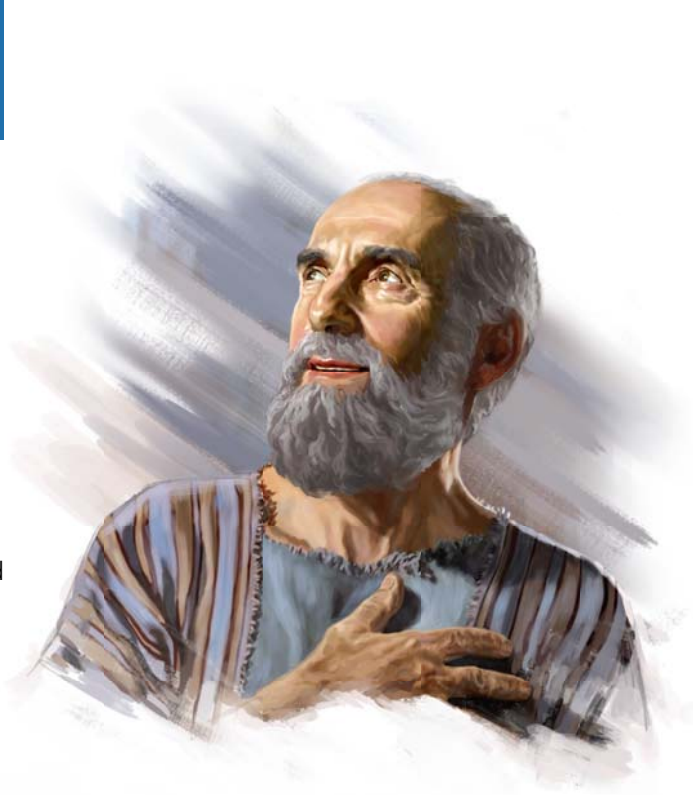
What did the apostle Paul mean when he said: “Through law I died toward law”?—Gal. 2:19.

■ Paul wrote: “Through law I died toward law, so that I might become alive toward God.”—Gal. 2:19.

What Paul wrote was in line with a central point that he was making to the congregations in the Roman province of Galatia. Some Christians there were being influenced by false teachers. Such men were teaching that to gain salvation one had to observe requirements of the Mosaic Law, particularly circumcision. But Paul knew that God no longer required believers to be circumcised. With powerful reasoning, he refuted the false teachings and strengthened the brothers’ faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ.—Gal. 2:4; 5:2.

The Bible says clearly that once a person dies, he is not conscious of or affected by anything around him. (Eccl. 9:5) When Paul said: “I died toward law,” he meant that the Mosaic Law no longer had any hold on him. Rather, Paul was sure that by his faith in the ransom sacrifice, he had “become alive toward God.”

That change in Paul’s situation came about “through law.” How so? He had just explained that “a man is declared righteous, not by works of law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ.” (Gal. 2:16) Granted, the Law had served an important function. Paul explained to the Galatians: “It was added to make transgressions manifest, until the offspring should arrive to whom the promise had been made.” (Gal. 3:19) Yes, the Law made it obvious that imperfect, sinful humans could not keep the Law perfectly and that they needed a final, perfect sacrifice. So the Law led people to “the offspring,” the



Christ. By exercising faith in Jesus Christ, one could be declared righteous by God. (Gal. 3:24) Paul came to that point because through the Law he had come to accept and put faith in Jesus. Paul thereupon “died toward law” and became “alive toward God.” The Law no longer had power over him, but God did.

Paul expressed a similar thought in his letter to the Romans. “My brothers, you also were made dead to the Law through the body of the Christ . . . We have been released from the Law, because we have died to that which restrained us.” (Rom. 7: 4, 6) This scripture as well as Galatians 2:19 reveals that Paul was not speaking about dying as a condemned sinner under the Law. Rather, he was pointedly speaking about being liberated. The Law no longer had any hold on him and others like him. They were set free by faith in Christ’s ransom.

IN THIS ISSUE

Study Article 22: August 2-8 2

Help Your Bible Students to Become Baptized Disciples

Study Article 23: August 9-15 8

With Jehovah, You Are Never Alone

Study Article 24: August 16-22 14

You Can Escape From Satan's Snares!

Study Article 25: August 23-29 20

Do Not Stumble "These Little Ones"

DID YOU KNOW? 25

In Jesus' day, what kinds of taxes did people have to pay?

LIFE STORY 26

Taking Steps With Jehovah in Mind

QUESTIONS FROM READERS 31

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COVER PICTURE:

A brother, accompanied by his wife, conducts a Bible study with a young man who has a printed copy of the *Enjoy Life Forever!* book (See study article 22, paragraph 2)

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