

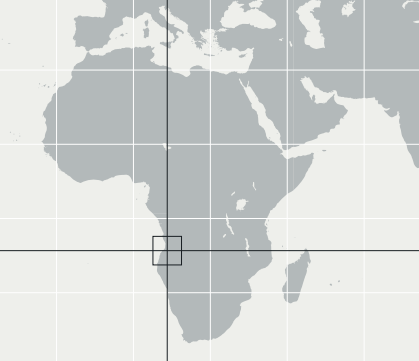
NOVEMBER 2016

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
DECEMBER 26, 2016–JANUARY 29, 2017



COVER IMAGE: ANGOLA

In the city of Benguela, special pioneers are conducting a Bible study in sign language, using the brochure *Listen to God and Live Forever*. The 10 deaf publishers in that city were delighted that 62 people attended the Memorial there in 2015

PUBLISHERS
115,948

BIBLE STUDIES
502,848

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2015)
529,827

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THE  **WATCHTOWER®**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH’S KINGDOM

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) Issue 17 November 2016 is published monthly with an additional issue published in January, March, May, July, September, and November by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2016 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

November 2016
Vol. 137, No. 17 ENGLISH

A WORD That Meant So Much!



“WOMAN.” That is the way Jesus sometimes addressed individuals of the opposite sex. For example, when healing a disabled person who had been bent double for 18 years, he said: “Woman, you are released from your weakness.” (Luke 13:10-13) Jesus even used this customary form of address, which was considered polite in Bible times, when speaking to his own mother. (John 19:26; 20:13) But there was another word that was more than polite.

The Bible uses an especially kind and tender word when referring to certain women. Jesus used it when he spoke to a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for 12 years. The way she approached Jesus was not in strict harmony with God’s Law, which stated that a person in her condition was unclean. It could be argued that she should have kept herself separate from others because of her condition. (Lev. 15:19-27) But she was desperate. In fact, “she had suffered much at the hands of many physicians and had spent all her resources, and she was no better but, rather, had become worse.”—Mark 5:25, 26.

The woman quietly made her way through the crowd, approached Jesus from behind, and touched the fringe of his outer garment. Her flow of blood stopped immediately! The woman hoped that she could escape notice, but Jesus asked: “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45-47) At this, the frightened and trembling woman fell down before Jesus “and told him the whole truth.”—Mark 5:33.

To put the woman at ease, Jesus kindly said: “Take courage, daughter!” (Matt. 9:22) According to Bible scholars, the Hebrew and Greek words for “daughter” can be used metaphorically as an expression of “kindness and tenderness.” Jesus went on to give her more reassurance by saying: “Your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed from your grievous sickness.”—Mark 5:34.

“Daughter.” That was how the wealthy Israelite Boaz addressed the Moabiteess Ruth. She too had reason to feel unsure of herself because she was gleaning barley on the land of a man unknown to her. “Listen, my daughter,” said Boaz. He then urged Ruth to keep on gleaning in his fields. Ruth fell facedown before Boaz and asked why he had been so kind to her, a foreigner. Boaz answered by giving further reassurance: “A full report was made to me of all you have done for your mother-in-law [the widow Naomi] . . . May Jehovah reward you for what you have done.”—Ruth 2: 8-12.

What fine examples Jesus and Boaz are for Christian elders! At times, two elders may meet with a Christian woman who is in need of Scriptural help and encouragement. After seeking Jehovah’s direction in prayer and listening carefully to what their sister says, the elders will be in a position to give her reassurance and comfort from God’s Word.—Rom. 15:4.



“Keep On Encouraging One Another Each Day”

“If you have any word of encouragement for the people, tell it.”—ACTS 13:15.

SONGS: 121, 45

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why is encouragement a power for good?

What do the examples of Jehovah, Jesus, and the apostle Paul teach us about giving encouragement?

How can we give encouragement that is effective?

“MY PARENTS hardly ever encourage me, but they criticize me a lot. And their words can be so hurtful,” says Cristina, who is 18 years old.^[1] “They say that I’m immature, that I’ll never learn, and that I’m fat. So I cry often and prefer not to talk to them. I feel that I’m worthless.” How devastating life without encouragement can be!

² On the other hand, encouragement is a power for good. “I have fought feelings of worthlessness for many years,” says Rubén. “But one time, I was preaching with an elder who realized that I was having a bad day. He listened with sympathy as I expressed my feelings. Then he reminded me of the good I was accomplishing. He also reminded me of Jesus’ words—that each of us is worth more than many sparrows. I often recall that scripture, and it still touches my heart. The elder’s words made a huge difference.”—Matt. 10:31.

³ It should not surprise us that the Bible emphasizes the need for regular encouragement. The apostle Paul wrote to

1, 2. Show why encouragement is important.

3. (a) What did the apostle Paul say about encouragement? (b) What will we consider in this article?

the Hebrew Christians: “Beware, brothers, for fear there should ever develop in any one of you a wicked heart lacking faith by drawing away from the living God; but keep on encouraging one another *each day*, . . . so that none of you should become hardened by the deceptive power of sin.” (Heb. 3:12, 13) You know how important the counsel to encourage one another is if you recall a time when words of encouragement lifted your spirits. So let us consider these questions: Why is encouragement vital? What can we learn from the way Jehovah, Jesus, and Paul encouraged others? And how can we give encouragement that is effective?

PEOPLE NEED ENCOURAGEMENT

⁴ All of us need encouragement. That is especially true when we are growing up. “Children . . . need encouragement like plants need water,” explains educator Timothy Evans. “With encouragement, a child feels worthwhile and appreciated.” But we live in critical times. People are selfish, there is little natural affection, and encouragement is scarce. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Some parents do not commend their children because their own parents never gave them any encouragement. Many employees are not being commended, so they complain that there is a chronic shortage of encouragement in the workplace.

⁵ Encouragement often involves commending a person for something he or she did well. We can also be encouraging by reassuring others that they have good qualities or by speaking “consoling to those who are discouraged.”

4. Who needs encouragement, but why is it scarce today?

5. What does encouragement involve?

(1 Thess. 5:14, ftn.) The Greek word usually translated “encouragement” literally means “a calling to one’s side.” As we serve alongside our brothers and sisters, we likely have opportunities to say something encouraging. (**Read Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10.**) Do we use suitable occasions to let others know why we love and appreciate them? Before answering that question, we would do well to think about this proverb: “A word spoken at the right time—how good it is!” —Prov. 15:23.

⁶ Satan the Devil wants to discourage us because he knows that discouragement can make us weak spiritually and in other ways. “If you become discouraged in the day of distress,” says Proverbs 24:10, “your strength will be meager.” Satan used a combination of calamities and accusations in an effort to discourage righteous Job, but that cruel scheme failed. (Job 2:3; 22:3; 27:5) We can fight the works of the Devil by encouraging members of our family and of the congregation. This will help to make our home and the Kingdom Hall places where we feel happy and secure.

BIBLE EXAMPLES OF ENCOURAGEMENT

⁷ **Jehovah.** The psalmist sang: “Jehovah is close to the brokenhearted; he saves those who are discouraged.” (Ps. 34:18, ftn.) When Jeremiah was afraid and discouraged, Jehovah built up that faithful prophet’s confidence. (Jer. 1:6-10) And just imagine how encouraged

6. Why does the Devil want to discourage us? Give an example.

7, 8. (a) What Bible examples show that Jehovah considers it important to give encouragement? (b) What can parents do to follow Jehovah’s example? (See opening picture.)

the elderly prophet Daniel was when God sent an angel to strengthen him. That angel called Daniel a “very precious,” or “highly esteemed,” man! (Dan. 10:8, 11, 18, 19; ftn.) Could you similarly encourage publishers, pioneers, and older brothers and sisters whose strength is failing?

⁸ God did not feel that because he and his dear Son had worked together for ages, there was no need to commend and encourage Jesus when he was on earth. Instead, on two occasions Jesus heard his Father speak from heaven and say: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5) God thus commended Jesus and assured him that he was doing well. Jesus must have felt encouraged on the two occasions when he heard these words—at the beginning of his ministry and during the final year of his earthly life. Jehovah also sent an angel to strengthen Jesus when he was in anguish on the night before his death. (Luke 22:43) If we are parents, let us follow Jehovah’s example by regularly encouraging our children and giving them commendation when they do well. We should also give them extra support if they are facing tests of integrity day after day in school.

⁹ **Jesus.** On the night when Jesus instituted the Memorial, pride was one negative trait that he saw in his apostles. Jesus humbly washed their feet, but they were still arguing about which one of them was the greatest; and Peter was overconfident. (Luke 22:24, 33, 34) Yet, Jesus commended his faithful apostles for sticking with him in his trials. He pre-

dicted that they would do works greater than his, and he assured them that God had affection for them. (Luke 22:28; John 14:12; 16:27) We might ask ourselves, ‘Shouldn’t I imitate Jesus by commending my children and others for what they do well instead of focusing on their shortcomings?’

¹⁰ **The apostle Paul.** In his letters, Paul spoke highly of his fellow Christians. He had traveled with some of them for years and undoubtedly knew their faults, but he said good things about them. For instance, Paul described Timothy as his “beloved and faithful child in the Lord,” one who would genuinely care for the concerns of other Christians. (1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19, 20) The apostle commended Titus to the Corinthian congregation as “my companion and a fellow worker for your interests.” (2 Cor. 8:23) How encouraged Timothy and Titus must have been to learn what Paul thought of them!

¹¹ Paul and Barnabas risked their lives by going back to places where they had suffered violent attacks. For instance, even though they had faced fanatic opposition in Lystra, they returned there in order to encourage new disciples to remain in the faith. (Acts 14:19-22) In Ephesus, Paul faced an angry crowd. Acts 20:1, 2 says: “When the uproar . . . subsided, Paul sent for the disciples, and after he had encouraged them and said farewell, he began his journey to Macedonia. After going through those regions and giving many words of encouragement to the ones there, he arrived in Greece.” Giving encouragement certainly was very important to Paul.

9. What can we learn from the way Jesus treated his apostles?

10, 11. How did the apostle Paul show that he saw the need to encourage others?

ENCOURAGEMENT IN ACTION TODAY

¹² One reason why our heavenly Father has kindly arranged for us to have regular meetings is that we can give and receive encouragement there. **(Read Hebrews 10:24, 25.)** Just like Jesus' early followers, we meet together to learn and to be encouraged. (1 Cor. 14:31) Cristina, who was mentioned at the beginning of this article, says: "What I like most about the meetings is the love and encouragement I receive there. Sometimes I feel depressed when I arrive at the Kingdom Hall. But then sisters approach me, give me a hug, and say I look pretty. They tell me that they love me and are pleased to see my spiritual progress. Their encouragement makes me feel so much better!" How refreshing it is when all of us play our part in "an interchange of encouragement"!—Rom. 1: 11, 12.

¹³ Even experienced servants of God need encouragement. Consider Joshua. He had served God faithfully for many years. Yet, Jehovah told Moses to encourage him, saying: "Commission Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, because he is the one who will cross over before this people and he is the one who will cause them to inherit the land that you will see." (Deut. 3:27, 28) Joshua was about to take on the huge responsibility of leading the Israelites in the conquest of the Promised Land. He would face setbacks and at least one military defeat. (Josh. 7:1-9) No wonder Joshua needed to be encouraged and strengthened! So let us person-

12. What part do our meetings play in our giving and receiving encouragement?

13. Why do experienced servants of God need encouragement?

ally encourage elders, including circuit overseers, who work hard to care for the flock of God. **(Read 1 Thessalonians 5: 12, 13.)** "Sometimes the brothers give us a thank-you letter saying how much they enjoyed our visit," stated one circuit overseer. "We keep these letters and read them when we are feeling low. They are a real source of encouragement."

¹⁴ Christian elders and parents find that commendation and encouragement are effective in emphasizing Bible counsel. When Paul commended the Corinthians for applying his counsel, they must have been encouraged to continue doing what was right. (2 Cor. 7:8-11) Andreas, who has two children, says: "Encouragement helps children to grow

14. What shows that commendation and encouragement are effective when we are giving counsel?

Our children thrive when we warmly encourage them
(See paragraph 14)



up spiritually and emotionally. You nail down counsel by giving encouragement. Even though our kids know what is right, *doing* the right thing becomes their way of life through our constant encouragement.”

HOW TO GIVE EFFECTIVE ENCOURAGEMENT

¹⁵ *Show appreciation for the fine efforts and positive qualities of fellow worshippers.* (2 Chron. 16:9; Job 1:8) Jehovah and Jesus greatly value what all of us do to support Kingdom interests, even if our efforts and contributions are limited because of our circumstances. **(Read Luke 21:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:12.)** For instance, some of our dear elderly ones make great effort to attend and share in meetings and the ministry regularly. Should we not commend and encourage them?

¹⁶ *Seize opportunities to encourage others.* If we see something that merits commendation, why hold back? Consider what happened when Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch in Pisidia. The presiding officers of the synagogue there told them: “Men, brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, tell it.” Paul responded by giving a fine talk. (Acts 13:13-16, 42-44) If we can offer a word of encouragement, why not speak up? We will very likely find that if we make it a habit to be encouraging, people will encourage us in return. —Luke 6:38.

¹⁷ *Be sincere and specific.* General words

of encouragement and commendation are helpful, but Jesus’ message to Christians in Thyatira shows that being *specific* is better. **(Read Revelation 2:18, 19.)** If we are parents, for example, we could tell our children what we appreciate about the spiritual progress they are making. We might tell a single mother what impresses us regarding the way she is raising her children despite her challenging situation. Such commendation and encouragement can do so much good!

¹⁸ Jehovah will not personally tell us to say something encouraging to a particular individual as he told Moses to encourage and strengthen Joshua. Yet, God is pleased when we speak encouragingly to fellow believers and others. (Prov. 19:17; Heb. 12:12) For instance, we might tell a public speaker how his talk gave us advice we needed or helped us to understand a certain scripture. “Although we spoke for only a few minutes,” wrote a sister to a visiting speaker, “you saw my heavy heart, and you comforted and uplifted me. I want you to know that when you spoke in such a kind way, both from the platform and in person, I felt that it was a gift from Jehovah.”

¹⁹ We will very likely find many ways to build others up spiritually if we are determined to apply Paul’s counsel: “Keep encouraging one another and building one another up, just as you are in fact doing.” (1 Thess. 5:11) All of us will surely please Jehovah if we “keep on encouraging one another each day.”

15. What is one step we can take to encourage others?

16. Why should we never hold back from encouraging others?

17. What gives deep meaning to our words of commendation?

18, 19. How can we build up those needing encouragement?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 1) Some names have been changed.



Organized in Harmony With God's Own Book

“Jehovah founded the earth in wisdom. He solidly established the heavens in discernment.”—PROV. 3:19.

DOES God have an organization? “You don’t need an organization to direct you,” some may say. “All you need is a personal relationship with God.” Is that viewpoint correct? What do the facts indicate?

² In this article, we will discuss evidence that Jehovah, the God of order, is the incomparable Organizer. We will also consider how we should respond to the direction we receive from Jehovah’s organization. (1 Cor. 14:33, 40) In the first century C.E. and in our day, the Scriptures have helped the earthly part of Jehovah’s organization to do the far-reaching work of preaching the good news. Because we stick to the Bible and comply with organizational instructions, we promote the cleanness, peace, and unity of the entire congregation.

JEHOVAH, THE INCOMPARABLE ORGANIZER

³ Creation proves that God is the incomparable Organizer. “Jehovah founded the earth in wisdom,” says the Bible. “He solidly established the heavens in discernment.” (Prov. 3:19)

1, 2. (a) How do some react to the thought that God has an organization? (b) What will we discuss in this article?

3. What convinces you that Jehovah is the incomparable Organizer?

SONGS: 6, 24

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What convinces you that Jehovah is the incomparable Organizer?

Why is it reasonable to conclude that Jehovah’s worshippers would be organized?

How does the counsel in God’s Word help us to maintain cleanness, peace, and unity?

We know only “the fringes of [God’s] ways,” and “only a faint whisper has been heard of him.” (Job 26:14) Yet, the little we know about planets, stars, and galaxies moves us to acknowledge that these celestial bodies are superbly organized. (Ps. 8:3, 4) Galaxies consist of millions of stars, all moving in space in an orderly way. Why, planets in our solar system travel in orbits around the sun as though they were humbly obeying traffic laws! Surely the mind-boggling order evident in the universe helps us to see that Jehovah, who “skillfully made the heavens” and the earth, deserves our praise, loyalty, and worship.—Ps. 136:1, 5-9.

⁴ Science has revealed much about the universe and our earthly home, and it has brought us advantages in various aspects of life. But there are many questions science has not been able to answer. For instance, astronomers cannot tell us exactly *how* the universe came into existence or *why* we are on planet Earth with its abundance of life. Also, people in general cannot explain why mankind has a strong desire to live forever. (Eccl. 3:11) Why are there so many important but unanswered questions? Partly because numerous scientists and others tend to promote godless thinking and endorse the theory of evolution. But in his own Book, Jehovah answers questions weighing on the hearts of people everywhere.

⁵ We are dependent on the consistent and reliable laws of nature established by Jehovah. Electricians, plumb-

ers, engineers, pilots, surgeons—all of them depend on these laws in order to do their work. For instance, surgeons count on the fact that the human anatomy is basically consistent. So a surgeon does not have to search for a patient’s heart. And all of us respect the laws of nature. Trying to defy the law of gravity might cost us our life!

ORGANIZED BY GOD

⁶ The universe truly is a marvel of organization. Surely, then, we should expect that Jehovah wants his worshippers to be well-organized. In fact, to that end God has provided the Bible for our guidance. Living without the help of God’s organization and his standards would result in unhappiness and misery.

⁷ The Bible is no mere collection of unrelated Jewish and Christian literature. Rather, it is a well-organized book—a divinely inspired masterpiece. The individual books of the Bible are interconnected. Interwoven from Genesis to Revelation is the Bible’s central theme—the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty and the fulfillment of his purpose for the earth by means of his Kingdom under Christ, the promised “offspring.” —**Read Genesis 3:15; Matthew 6:10; Revelation 11:15.**

⁸ The people of ancient Israel were a model of organization. Under the Mosaic Law, for example, there were “women who were organized to serve at the entrance of the tent of meeting.” (Ex.

6. Why should we expect Jehovah’s worshippers to be organized?

7. What shows that the Bible is a well-organized book?

8. Why can we say that the Israelites were well-organized?

4. Why has science failed to answer many questions?

5. In what ways are we dependent on the laws of nature?

38:8) The moving of the Israelite camp and the tabernacle took place in an orderly way. Later, King David organized the Levites and the priests into effective divisions. (1 Chron. 23:1-6; 24:1-3) And when they obeyed Jehovah, the Israelites were blessed with order, peace, and unity.—Deut. 11:26, 27; 28:1-14.

⁹ The first-century Christian congregation was organized, and it benefited from the direction of the governing body, initially made up of the apostles. (Acts 6:1-6) Later, additional brothers were added to that governing body. (Acts 15:6) Counsel and instructions were also provided by means of inspired letters written by men who were members of or closely associated with the first-century governing body. (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9) How did the congregations benefit from following the direction of the governing body?

¹⁰ **Read Acts 16:4, 5.** Brothers traveling on behalf of the governing body shared “the decrees that had been decided on by the apostles and the elders who were in Jerusalem.” As congregations observed those decrees, they “continued to be made firm in the faith and to increase in number day by day.” Does this Bible account contain a lesson that we are wise to apply within God’s organization today?

DO YOU FOLLOW DIRECTION?

¹¹ What should members of Branch

9. What shows that the first-century Christian congregation was organized?

10. What resulted when the early congregations observed the decrees decided on by the governing body? (See opening picture.)

11. How should appointed men respond to the direction they receive from God’s organization?

Committees or Country Committees, circuit overseers, and congregation elders do when they receive direction from God’s organization today? Jehovah’s own Book directs all of us to be obedient and submissive. (Deut. 30:16; Heb. 13:7, 17) A critical or rebellious spirit has no place in God’s organization, for such an attitude could disrupt our loving, peaceful, and united congregations. Of course, no loyal Christian would want to display a disrespectful and disloyal spirit like that of Diotrephes. (**Read 3 John 9, 10.**) We might well ask ourselves: ‘Do I contribute to the spirituality of those around me? Am I quick to accept and support the direction given by the brothers taking the lead?’

¹² Consider a recent decision made by the Governing Body. “Questions From Readers” in *The Watchtower* of November 15, 2014, outlined an adjustment in how elders and ministerial servants are appointed. The article noted that the first-century governing body authorized traveling overseers to make such appointments. In line with that pattern, since September 1, 2014, circuit overseers have been appointing elders and ministerial servants. The circuit overseer tries to get to know the men who are recommended and to work with them in the field service if possible. He also observes the family of the brother under consideration. (1 Tim. 3:4, 5) The body of elders and the circuit overseer carefully consider the Scriptural qualifications for ministerial servants and elders.—1 Tim. 3:1-10, 12, 13; 1 Pet. 5:1-3.

12. What adjustment has been made in how elders and ministerial servants are appointed?

¹³ We need to follow the Bible-based direction we receive from the elders. These loyal shepherds within God's organization are guided by "wholesome," or "healthful; beneficial," instruction found in God's own Book. (1 Tim. 6:3; fn.) Recall Paul's counsel regarding disorderly ones in the congregation. Some individuals were 'not working at all but were meddling with what did not concern them.' They were evidently admonished by the elders but persisted in disregarding the counsel. How was the congregation to deal with such a person? Paul directed: "Keep this one marked and stop associating with him." That counsel was balanced with the caution not to treat such a person as an enemy. (2 Thess. 3:11-15) Today, elders may give a warning talk about someone's persisting in a course that reflects badly on the congregation, such as dating an unbeliever. (1 Cor. 7:39) How do you react when the elders find it necessary to give such a talk? If you are aware of the situation described in the talk, will you take care to avoid socializing with such an individual? Your loving concern and firm stand may move the person to abandon a disorderly course.^[1]

MAINTAIN CLEANNES, PEACE, AND UNITY

¹⁴ We can contribute to the spiritual cleanness of the congregation by following the direction found in God's Word. Consider the situation in ancient Corinth. Paul had poured himself out preaching in that city, and he loved his

fellow "holy ones" there. (1 Cor. 1:1, 2) But how troubling it must have been for him to have to address the problem of sexual immorality that was being tolerated in that congregation! Paul directed the elders to hand the immoral man over to Satan—in other words, to disfellowship him. To preserve the congregation's purity, the elders needed to clear out the "leaven." (1 Cor. 5:1, 5-7, 12) When we support the elders' decision to disfellowship an unrepentant wrongdoer, we help to maintain the cleanness of the congregation and perhaps move the person to repent and seek Jehovah's forgiveness.

¹⁵ Another problem in Corinth had to be addressed. Some brothers were taking fellow believers to court. Paul asked them a sobering question: "Why not rather let yourselves be wronged?" (1 Cor. 6:1-8) Similar situations have arisen today. At times, peace among spiritual brothers has been disrupted because a failed business venture led to loss of money and perhaps to accusations of fraud. Some have taken their brothers to court, but God's own Book helps us to see that it is better to suffer loss than to bring reproach on God's name or disturb the peace of the congregation.^[2] To resolve serious problems and disputes, we should of course apply Jesus' counsel. **(Read Matthew 5:23, 24; 18:15-17.)** When we do so, we promote unity in the family of Jehovah's worshippers.

¹⁶ Jehovah's own Book shows why we should expect his people to be united.

13. How can we show our support for the direction we receive from the elders?

14. How can we contribute to the congregation's cleanness?

15. How can we maintain peace in the congregation?

16. Why should we expect God's people to be united?



Elders endeavor to give spiritual help to one who has taken a false step
(See paragraph 17)

The psalmist sang: “Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1) When they obeyed Jehovah, the Israelites were organized and unified. Foretelling the future condition of his people, God declared: “In unity I will place them, like sheep in the pen.” (Mic. 2:12) Moreover, Jehovah foretold through the prophet Zephaniah: “I will change the language of the peoples to a pure language [of Scriptural truth], so that all of them may call on the name of Jehovah, to serve him shoulder to shoulder [or, “worship him in unity,” ftn.]” (Zeph. 3:9) How grateful we are to have the privilege of worshipping Jehovah in unity!

¹⁷ If unity and cleanness are to be maintained in a congregation, the elders must care for judicial matters promptly and in a loving way. Paul knew that

17. To maintain a congregation’s unity and cleanness, how should the elders handle cases of wrongdoing?

God’s love is not guided by mere sentiment, and He does not turn a blind eye to wrongdoing. (Prov. 15:3) So Paul did not hold back from writing First Corinthians, a strong yet loving letter. Second Corinthians, written some months later, shows that progress was made because the elders had applied the apostle’s direction. If a Christian takes a false step before he is aware of it, qualified men should try to readjust him in a spirit of mildness.—Gal. 6:1.

¹⁸ It is clear that the inspired counsel in God’s own Book helped first-century Christians in Corinth and elsewhere to maintain cleanness, peace, and unity in their congregations. (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4: 11-13, ftn.; 1 Pet. 3:8) As a result, our brothers and sisters of that time were able to accomplish much in the ministry. In fact, Paul could say that the good news “was preached in all creation under heaven.” (Col. 1:23) Today, knowledge of God’s wonderful purposes is being spread throughout the earth as a result of the efforts of those who are part of one united preaching organization. The next article will give further proof that these ones highly esteem the Bible and are determined to honor the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.—Ps. 71: 15, 16.

18. (a) In what ways did counsel provided in God’s Word help the first-century congregations? (b) What will be discussed in the next article?

ENDNOTES:

[1] (paragraph 13) See *Organized to Do Jehovah’s Will*, pp. 134-136.

[2] (paragraph 15) For information about situations in which one Christian might decide to take legal action against another Christian, see “Keep Yourself in God’s Love,” p. 223, ftn.



Do You Highly Esteem Jehovah's Own Book?

“When you received God’s word, . . . you accepted it . . . just as it truthfully is, as the word of God.”—1 THESS. 2:13.

SONGS: 96, 94

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What counsel does the Bible give about controlling our emotions?

Why can we say that Jehovah’s chariot is on the move?

How can you show that you fully support Jehovah’s organization?

JEHOVAH’S servants highly esteem God’s own holy book, the Bible. Being imperfect, we all receive Scriptural counsel at times. How will we respond to it? Consider the first-century Christians Euodia and Syntyche. Serious problems arose between these anointed women. What problems? The Bible does not say. But for the sake of illustration, consider the following possibility.

² Suppose Euodia invited some brothers and sisters to her home for a meal and pleasant association. Syntyche was not invited, but she heard about the good time that everyone had. Syntyche may have said: ‘I cannot believe that Euodia did not invite me! I thought we were best friends.’ Feeling betrayed, Syntyche began to look at Euodia with doubt and even suspicion. So Syntyche arranged her own gathering and invited the same brothers and sisters—but not Euodia! The problem that existed between Euodia and Syntyche could have disrupted the peace of the whole congregation. The Bible does not tell

1-3. How might the differences between Euodia and Syntyche have arisen, and how can such problems be avoided? (See opening picture.)

us the outcome, but these sisters may have responded well to the apostle Paul's loving counsel.—Phil. 4:2, 3.

³ Similar situations sometimes cause difficulties in congregations of Jehovah's people today. However, such problems can be solved or even avoided if we apply the counsel found in God's Word, the Bible. And if we highly esteem Jehovah's own Book, we will live by its instructions.—Ps. 27:11.

GOD'S OWN BOOK AND HUMAN EMOTIONS

⁴ It is not easy to control our emotions when we feel that we have been slighted or treated unjustly. It can be devastating if we are mistreated because of our ethnic background, the color of our skin, or some other physical difference. How much greater the pain is if it is caused by a fellow Christian! Does God's Word provide counsel to help us if we face this ugly side of imperfect human behavior?

⁵ Jehovah has observed human relations since mankind's beginning. He takes note of our emotions and actions. Thoughts, including those that are emotionally charged, can lead to words and actions we may later regret. How wise it is to apply the Bible's counsel to control our temper and avoid being quick to take offense! (**Read Proverbs 16:32; Ecclesiastes 7:9.**) No doubt all of us need to work at being less sensitive and more forgiving. Jehovah and Jesus take forgiveness very seriously. (Matt. 6:14, 15) Do you need to be more forgiving or to give attention to controlling your emotions?

4, 5. What counsel does God's Word give us about controlling our emotions?

⁶ People who fail to control their emotions often become bitter. As a result, others may not want to be around them. A bitter individual can exert a bad influence in the congregation. He may try to disguise his bitterness or even his hatred, but negative thoughts lurking in his heart "will be exposed in the congregation." (Prov. 26:24-26) The elders may be able to help such individuals to see that bitterness, hatred, and the harboring of grudges are traits that have no place in God's organization. Jehovah's own priceless Book is very clear about this. (Lev. 19:17, 18; Rom. 3:11-18) Do you agree with it?

REMEMBER HOW WE ARE BEING LED

⁷ Jehovah leads and feeds those in the earthly part of his organization by means of "the faithful and discreet slave" under the direction of Christ, the "head of the congregation." (Matt. 24:45-47; Eph. 5:23) Like the first-century governing body, this slave accepts God's inspired word, or message, and highly esteems it. (**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13.**) What are some directives, or instructions, provided in the Bible for our benefit?

⁸ The Bible directs us to attend meetings regularly. (Heb. 10:24, 25) It urges us to promote unity of doctrine. (1 Cor. 1:10) God's Word tells us to give the Kingdom first place in our lives. (Matt. 6:33) The Scriptures also emphasize our duty and privilege to preach from house to house, in public places, and informally. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 5:42;

6. Why should we guard against bitterness?

7, 8. (a) How does Jehovah lead the earthly part of his organization? (b) What are some of the directives found in God's Word, and why should we obey them?

17:17; 20:20) God's own Book directs Christian elders to keep his organization clean. (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 13; 1 Tim. 5:19-21) And Jehovah decrees that all those in his organization must be clean physically and spiritually.—2 Cor. 7:1.

⁹ Some may feel that they can interpret the Bible on their own. However, Jesus has appointed the 'faithful slave' to be the only channel for dispensing spiritual food. Since 1919, the glorified Jesus Christ has been using that slave to help his followers understand God's own Book and heed its directives. By obeying the instructions found in the Bible, we promote cleanness, peace, and unity in the congregation. Each one of us does well to ask himself, 'Am I loyal to the channel that Jesus is using today?'

JEHOVAH'S CHARIOT IS ON THE MOVE!

¹⁰ Jehovah's written Word acquaints

9. What is the only channel that is being used to help us understand God's Word?

10. How is the heavenly part of Jehovah's organization described in the book of Ezekiel?

How thankful we are for the many construction volunteers who work on projects tirelessly!

(See paragraph 11)



us with the heavenly part of his organization. For example, the prophet Ezekiel received a vision in which the heavenly part of God's organization is represented by a celestial chariot. (Ezek. 1:4-28) Jehovah rides on this chariot, and it goes wherever his spirit impels it to go. In turn, the heavenly part of his organization influences the earthly part. The chariot certainly has been on the move! Think about the many organizational changes that have been made during the past decade—and bear in mind that Jehovah is behind such developments. With Christ and the holy angels about to destroy this wicked world, Jehovah's chariot is rapidly moving toward the vindication of his sovereignty and the sanctification of his holy name!

¹¹ Reflect on what the earthly part of God's organization has been accomplishing in these last days. *Construction.* Hundreds of workers were very busy building the new headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses at Warwick, New York, U.S.A. Under the direction of the Worldwide Design/Construction Department, thousands of volunteers worldwide are working hard to build new Kingdom Halls and expand branch facilities. How thankful we are for the many willing volunteers who work tirelessly on such projects! Remember that Jehovah is blessing the Kingdom proclaimers earth wide who humbly and loyally contribute what they can to help finance such projects.—Luke 21:1-4.

¹² *Education.* Consider the various schools that promote divine education. (Isa. 2:2, 3) We have the Pioneer Ser-

11, 12. What are some things being accomplished by Jehovah's organization?

vice School, the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, Gilead School, Bethel Entrainants' School, the School for Circuit Overseers and Their Wives, the School for Congregation Elders, the Kingdom Ministry School, and the School for Branch Committee Members and Their Wives. How Jehovah loves to educate his people! Bible education is also promoted on our website, jw.org, where we have literature available in hundreds of languages. The site has special sections for children and for families as well as a section with news items. Have you been using jw.org in your ministry and in your family worship?

SHOW LOYALTY TO JEHOVAH AND SUPPORT HIS ORGANIZATION

¹³ What a privilege it is to be part of Jehovah's organization! With our knowledge of God's requirements and standards comes the responsibility to do what is right and uphold his sovereignty. As this world sinks deeper and deeper into debauchery, we must "hate what is bad," as Jehovah does. (Ps. 97:10) We refuse to join the ungodly and say: "Good is bad and bad is good." (Isa. 5:20) Because we want to please God, we strive to remain clean physically, morally, and spiritually. (1 Cor. 6:9-11) We love Jehovah and put our trust in him; we choose to show our loyalty to him by living up to the standards clearly outlined in his own precious Book. And we make every effort to comply with those standards at home, in the congregation, on the job, at school—everywhere. (Prov. 15:3) Consider further ways we can prove our loyalty to God.

13. What responsibility do we as Jehovah's loyal worshippers have?

¹⁴ *Child-rearing.* Christian parents display loyalty to Jehovah by training their children according to his Word. Godly parents are not unduly influenced by local cultural views about child-rearing. The spirit of the world is unacceptable in a Christian home. (Eph. 2:2) A baptized Christian father will not think, 'Well, in our country the women teach the children.' The Bible is clear on this subject when it says: "Fathers, . . . go on bringing [your children] up in the discipline and admonition [instruction; guidance] of Jehovah." (Eph. 6:4; *ftn.*) God-fearing fathers and mothers want their children to be like Samuel, for Jehovah was with him while he was growing up.—1 Sam. 3:19.

¹⁵ *Making decisions.* When we make major decisions in life, one way to demonstrate our loyalty to God is by seeking help from his written Word and organization. To illustrate the importance of doing so, consider a sensitive subject that affects many parents. It is a practice among certain immigrants to send their newborn babies to relatives to be cared for so that the parents can continue working and making money in their new country. Yes, this is a personal decision, but we should bear in mind that God holds us responsible for the decisions we make. **(Read Romans 14:12.)** Would it be wise to make important decisions about our family and our livelihood without first consulting the Bible? Of course not! We need our heavenly Father's help because we are unable to direct our own steps.—Jer. 10:23.

14. How can Christian parents show loyalty to God?

15. How do we show our loyalty to Jehovah when we are making major decisions?

¹⁶ One woman who gave birth to a baby boy while living in a foreign country was going to send the child back to her homeland to be cared for by his grandparents. At the time of the birth, one of Jehovah's Witnesses began to study the Bible with the woman. She made good progress and learned that it was her God-given duty to raise her child to worship Jehovah. (Ps. 127:3; Prov. 22:6) The young woman poured out her heart to Jehovah, as the Scriptures tell us to do. (Ps. 62:7, 8) She also opened her heart to her Bible teacher and spoke to others in the congregation. Despite pressure from her relatives and friends to send her child to the grandparents, she concluded that it was not right to do so. Her husband was so impressed by the way the congregation proved to be a refuge for her and the baby that he accepted a Bible study and began to attend meetings with his wife and child. Do you think that this mother felt that Jehovah answered her heartfelt prayer? Undoubtedly, she did feel that way.

¹⁷ *Following direction.* An important way that we display loyalty to God is by following the direction we receive from his organization. For example, consider the suggestions we have been given regarding our Bible students. It has been recommended that soon after establishing a personal study with someone in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* we take a few minutes after each study to direct the student's atten-

tion to the organization. We can do this by using the video *What Happens at a Kingdom Hall?* and the brochure *Who Are Doing Jehovah's Will Today?* It has been suggested that when we finish studying the *Bible Teach* book with a progressive student, we study the book "*Keep Yourself in God's Love*" with him, even if he is baptized by that time. The organization has given this direction so that new disciples will be "stabilized in the faith." (Col. 2:7) Are you following such suggestions from Jehovah's organization?

¹⁸ There are many reasons why we should be thankful to Jehovah! We owe him our very life, for without him we would not even move or exist. (Acts 17: 27, 28) He has given us a very precious gift—his own book, the Bible. We gratefully accept it as God's message, even as the Christians in Thessalonica received God's word and accepted it.—1 Thess. 2:13.

¹⁹ With the written Word of God in hand, we have drawn close to Jehovah and he has drawn close to us. (Jas. 4:8) Our heavenly Father has granted us the wonderful privilege of being part of his organization. How we appreciate such blessings! The psalmist put matters beautifully when he sang: "Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good; his loyal love endures forever." (Ps. 136:1) Twenty-six times in Psalm 136, we find the refrain "his loyal love endures forever." By proving loyal to Jehovah and his organization, we will experience the truthfulness of those heartening words because we will live forever!

16. When her son was born, what choice did one mother have to make, and what helped her to make the right one?

17. What direction have we received regarding Bible students?

18, 19. What are some reasons why we should be thankful to Jehovah?



“The Work Is Great”

IT IS time for a very important meeting in Jerusalem. King David has called together all his princes, court officials, and mighty men. They are thrilled to hear a special announcement. Jehovah has commissioned David’s son Solomon to build an extraordinary structure dedicated to the worship of the true God. Israel’s elderly king has received the architectural plan through inspiration and has given it to Solomon. “The work is great,” says David, “for it is not a temple for man but for Jehovah God.”—1 Chron. 28:1, 2, 6, 11, 12; 29:1.

David next asks this question: “Now who volunteers to come forward today with a gift in hand for Jehovah?” (1 Chron. 29:5) If you had been there, how would you have responded? Would you have been moved to support this great work? The Israelites sprang into action. Indeed, they “rejoiced over making . . . voluntary offerings, for they made the voluntary offerings to Jehovah with a complete heart.”—1 Chron. 29:9.

Centuries later, Jehovah set up something far greater than the temple. He established the

great spiritual temple, the arrangement for humans to approach him in worship on the basis of Jesus’ sacrifice. (Heb. 9:11, 12) How is Jehovah helping people to become reconciled to him today? Through our disciple-making work. (Matt. 28:19, 20) As a result of this activity, each year millions of Bible studies are conducted, thousands of disciples are baptized, and hundreds of new congregations are formed.

In turn, such growth calls for the printing of more Bible literature, the building and maintaining of Kingdom Halls, and the acquiring of assembly and convention sites. Do you not agree that our activity in spreading the good news is a great and rewarding work?—Matt. 24:14.

Love for God and neighbor and the urgency of the Kingdom-preaching work move God’s people “to come forward . . . with a gift in hand for Jehovah” by making voluntary donations. How thrilling it is to “honor Jehovah with [our] valuable things” and to see how such resources are used faithfully and discreetly to do the greatest work in human history!—Prov. 3:9.

HOW SOME CHOOSE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLDWIDE WORK

Many today “set something aside,” or budget an amount of money, and place it in the congregation contribution box labeled “Worldwide Work.” (1 Cor. 16:2) Each month, congregations forward these contributions to the office of Jehovah’s Witnesses that serves their country. It is also possible for you to send donations directly to a legal entity that is used by Jehovah’s Witnesses in your country. To learn the name of the primary legal entity used by Jehovah’s Witnesses in your country, please contact the branch office. The address can be found on www.jw.org. The types of donations that you can send directly are the following:

OUTRIGHT DONATIONS

- Donations via electronic bank transfer, debit card, credit card, or mobile money transfer. In some branches this is also possible using jw.org or another designated website.
- Donations of cash, jewelry, or other valuable personal property. Include a letter indicating that the cash or the item is an outright donation.

CONDITIONAL DONATION ARRANGEMENT

- Donations of cash with the condition that it can be returned if needed by the donor.
- Include a letter stating that the donation is conditional.

CHARITABLE PLANNING

In addition to gifts of money and valuable personal property, there are other methods of giving to bene-

fit Kingdom service worldwide. These are listed below. Regardless of the method or methods you would like to use, please first contact the branch office that serves your country to see which methods are available. Since legal requirements and tax laws vary, it is important to consult qualified tax and legal advisers before choosing the best way to donate.

Insurance: A donation made by specifying an entity used by Jehovah’s Witnesses as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or a retirement/pension plan.

Bank Accounts: Bank accounts, certificates of deposit, or individual retirement accounts set up as a trust or made payable on death to an entity used by Jehovah’s Witnesses in accord with local bank requirements.

Stocks and Bonds: Stocks and bonds donated to an entity used by Jehovah’s Witnesses as an outright gift or by means of a written agreement to transfer on death.

Real Estate: Salable real estate donated to an entity used by Jehovah’s Witnesses, either by making an outright gift or, in the case of residential property, by reserving a life estate to the donor, who can continue to live in the residence during his or her lifetime.

Gift Annuity: Money or securities donated to an entity used by Jehovah’s Witnesses under an arrangement where the donor receives a specified annuity payment every year for life. The donor may receive an income-tax deduction for the year

in which the gift annuity is established.

Wills and Trusts: Property or money may be bequeathed to an entity used by Jehovah’s Witnesses by means of a legally executed will or by specifying the entity as the beneficiary of a trust agreement. This arrangement may provide certain tax advantages.

As the term “charitable planning” implies, these types of donations typically require some planning on the part of the donor. To assist individuals desiring to benefit the worldwide work of Jehovah’s Witnesses through some form of charitable giving, a brochure entitled *Charitable Planning to Benefit Kingdom Service Worldwide* has been prepared. The brochure, available in English and Spanish, was written to provide information on a variety of ways that gifts may be made now or later, such as through a bequest at death. The information covered in this brochure may not apply fully to your situation because of tax laws or other laws in your country. By using such methods of charitable giving, many have helped to support our religious and humanitarian activities worldwide and maximize tax benefits. If available in your country, the brochure may be obtained by requesting a copy from the secretary of the local congregation.

For more information, select the link “Make a Donation to Our Worldwide Work” at the bottom of the home page on jw.org, or contact the branch office.



Called Out of Darkness

“[Jehovah] called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

—1 PET. 2:9.

IN 607 B.C.E., a massive Babylonian army under the command of King Nebuchadnezzar II invaded the city of Jerusalem. Regarding the bloodbath that followed, the Bible says: “[Nebuchadnezzar] killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary; he felt no compassion for young man or virgin, old or infirm. . . . He burned down the house of the true God, tore down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its fortified towers with fire, and destroyed everything of value.”—2 Chron. 36:17, 19.

² The destruction of Jerusalem should have come as no surprise to its inhabitants. For years, God’s prophets had warned the Jews that if they continued to disregard God’s Law, they would be delivered into the hands of the Babylonians. Many Jews would die by the edge of the sword; any who escaped death would likely have to spend the rest of their lives in exile in Babylon. (Jer. 15:2) What was life like for exiles there? Does the Babylonian captivity find a parallel in Christian times? If so, when?

1. Describe the events that occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem.
2. What warning of Jerusalem’s impending destruction did Jehovah give, and what would happen to the Jews?

SONGS: 95, 74

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

In what sense did God’s people come into Babylonian captivity from the second century C.E. onward?

In the mid-15th century, what factors contributed to a slight loosening of false religion’s grip on the people?

In the late 1800’s, what efforts did the anointed make to understand God’s Word correctly?

LIFE IN EXILE

³ What the prophets had foretold came to pass. Through Jeremiah, Jehovah advised the future exiles to accept their new situation and make the most of it. He said: “Build houses [in Babylon] and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their fruit. And seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you, and pray in its behalf to Jehovah, for in its peace you will have peace.” (Jer. 29:5, 7) Those who submitted to the will of God lived a relatively normal life in Babylon. Their captors allowed them to administer their own affairs to some extent. The exiles even had freedom to move about the country. Babylon was a center of trade and commerce in the ancient world, and documents that have been unearthed indicate that many Jews learned the art of buying and selling there, while others became skilled craftsmen. Some Jews even became prosperous. Exile in Babylon was nothing like the slavery in Egypt that the Israelites had experienced centuries before.—**Read Exodus 2:23-25.**

⁴ Although the material needs of the exiled Jews were being met, what of their spiritual needs? Jehovah’s temple with its altar had been destroyed, and the priesthood was no longer functioning in an organized manner. Among the exiles were faithful servants of God who had done nothing deserving of punishment, but they had to suffer along with the rest of the nation. Nevertheless, they did what they could to observe God’s Law.

3. How did exile in Babylon differ from the slavery the Israelites had experienced in Egypt?

4. Besides rebellious Israelites, who were affected by captivity in Babylon, and what limitations were placed on their ability to worship God acceptably?

For example, in Babylon, Daniel and three of his companions—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—abstained from foods that were forbidden to Jews. And we know that Daniel maintained regular communication with God in prayer. (Dan. 1:8; 6:10) Still, under a pagan administration, it was impossible for a God-fearing Jew to do everything the Law required.

⁵ Would the Israelites ever again be able to worship God in a completely acceptable way? At the time, it seemed most unlikely that they would. Babylon never released its captives. That policy, however, did not take Jehovah God into account. He had promised that his people would be liberated, and so they were. God’s word of promise never fails.—Isa. 55:11.

IS THERE A MODERN-DAY PARALLEL?

⁶ Have Christians ever experienced anything comparable to the Babylonian captivity? For many years, this journal suggested that God’s modern-day servants entered into Babylonian captivity in 1918 and that they were released from Babylon in 1919. However, for the reasons that we shall outline in this article and in the one following, a reexamination of the subject was necessary.

⁷ Consider: Babylon the Great is the world empire of false religion. Thus, in order to be subject to Babylonian captivity in 1918, God’s people would have had to become enslaved to false religion in some way at that time. The facts

5. What hope did Jehovah give his people, and why was this promise remarkable?

6, 7. Why is it appropriate for us to clarify our understanding of the modern-day Babylonian captivity?

show, however, that in the decades leading up to World War I, God's anointed servants were actually breaking free from Babylon the Great, not becoming enslaved to it. While it is true that the anointed were persecuted during the first world war, the tribulation they experienced was caused mainly by the *secular authorities*, not by Babylon the Great. So it does not really seem that Jehovah's people entered into captivity to Babylon the Great in 1918.

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY—BUT WHEN?

⁸ At Pentecost 33 C.E., thousands of Jews and proselytes were anointed with holy spirit. These new Christians became “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession.” (**Read 1 Peter 2:9, 10.**) The apostles kept careful watch over the congregations of God's people as long as they lived. However, especially after the death of the apostles, men arose who spoke “twisted things” in order to “draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:30; 2 Thess. 2:6-8) Many of these men had responsible positions in the congregations, serving as overseers and later as “bishops.” A clergy class was taking shape, although Jesus had said to his followers: “All of you are brothers.” (Matt. 23:8) Prominent men who were enamored of the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato introduced false religious ideas, gradually replacing the pure teachings of God's Word.

⁹ In 313 C.E., this apostate form of

Christianity was granted legal recognition by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine. From that time on, Church and State began working hand in hand. For example, after the Council of Nicaea, Constantine, who was present at the council, ordered Arius, a dissenting priest, into exile because Arius refused to acknowledge Jesus as God. Later, under Emperor Theodosius I (379-395 C.E.), the Catholic Church, as the contaminated form of Christianity came to be known, became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Historians refer to pagan Rome as having been “Christianized” in the fourth century. The truth is that by that time an apostate form of Christianity had joined the pagan religious organizations of the Roman Empire as members of Babylon the Great. Even so, a small number of anointed wheatlike Christians were doing their best to worship God, but their voices were being drowned out. (**Read Matthew 13:24, 25, 37-39.**) They truly were in Babylonian captivity!

¹⁰ Still, for the first few centuries of our Common Era, many people could read the Bible in either Greek or Latin. They were thus in a position to compare the teachings of God's Word with the dogmas of the church. On the basis of what they read in the Bible, some among them rejected the unscriptural creeds of the church, but it was dangerous—even fatal—to express such opinions openly.

¹¹ In time, Bible languages fell into disuse by the masses, and the church

8. Explain how genuine Christianity came to be corrupted. (See opening picture.)

9. Describe how apostate Christianity received the backing of the Roman State and what resulted.

10. On what basis could sincere people question church teachings during the first few centuries of our Common Era?

11. How did the Bible come to be under the control of the clergy?

opposed efforts to translate God's Word into the common tongues. As a result, only the clergy and some other educated people could read the Bible for themselves, although not all of the clergy could read and write well. Any dissent from what the church taught was severely punished. Faithful anointed servants of God had to meet together in discreet groups—if they could meet at all. As was the case in the earlier Babylonian exile, the anointed “royal priesthood” could not function in an organized way. Babylon the Great held the people in a vise-like grip!

THE LIGHT BEGINS TO APPEAR

12 Would true Christians ever be free to worship God openly and acceptably?

12, 13. What two factors contributed to a slight loosening of the grip of Babylon the Great on the people? Explain.

Yes! Glimmers of spiritual light began to penetrate the darkness, thanks to two important factors. The first was the invention in the mid-15th century of a printing press that used movable type. Before printing was brought to the Western world, the Bible was painstakingly copied by hand. Copies of the Bible were rare and expensive. It has been said that it would take ten months for a skilled copyist to produce just one handwritten copy of the Bible! In addition, the materials on which the copyists wrote (vellum or parchment) were costly. In contrast, using a press and paper—a more practical alternative—a skilled printer could produce 1,300 pages per day!

13 The second notable factor was the decision by a few courageous men at the dawn of the 16th century to translate God's Word into the languages spoken by the common people. Many transla-



Innovations in printing and courageous Bible translators helped loosen Babylon's grip
(See paragraphs 12, 13)

tors undertook this work at the risk of their lives. The church was horrified. A Bible in the hands of a God-fearing man or woman could be a dangerous weapon—or so the church leaders feared! And as the Bible became available, people did read it. As they read, they asked questions: ‘Where in God’s Word is there mention of purgatory? of paid masses for the dead? of popes and cardinals?’ From the point of view of the church, this was an outrage. How dare the multitudes question church leaders! The church fought back. Men and women were condemned for heresy because they rejected teachings of the church, some of which were based on the pagan philosophies of Aristotle and Plato—men who lived before Jesus Christ was born. The church handed down the death sentence; the State carried it out. The goal was to discourage people from reading the Bible and questioning the church. For the most part, the scheme worked. Nevertheless, a few brave souls refused to be cowed by Babylon the Great. They had now had a taste of God’s Word—and they wanted more! The stage was being set for a future deliverance from false religion.

¹⁴ Many who thirsted for Bible truth fled to countries where the influence of the church was less pervasive. They wanted to read and study and converse with one another without being told what to think. It was in one such country, the United States, that Charles Taze Russell and a few associates began their systematic study of the Bible in the late

1800’s. Initially, Brother Russell’s goal was to ascertain which of the prevailing religions was teaching the truth. He had carefully compared the teachings of many different religions, even non-Christian religions, with what the Bible says. He soon realized that not one of those religions completely adhered to God’s Word. At one point, he met with a number of local clergymen in hopes that these men would accept the truths that Russell and his associates had discovered from the Bible and teach them to members of their congregations. The clergymen were not interested. The Bible Students would have to face the facts: There could be no partnership with those determined to hold on to false religion.—**Read 2 Corinthians 6:14.**

¹⁵ Thus far we have seen that true Christians came into Babylonian captivity soon after the death of the last of the apostles. However, a number of questions arise: What additional evidence is there that in the decades leading up to 1914, the anointed were actually breaking free from Babylon the Great, no longer being enslaved by her? Is it true that Jehovah was displeased with his servants because they had slowed down in their preaching activity during World War I? And did some of our brothers during that period compromise their Christian neutrality and thereby incur Jehovah’s displeasure? Finally, if Christians went into bondage to false religion from the second century C.E. onward, when did they get freed? Excellent questions these. They will be answered in the next article.

14. (a) What conditions contributed to a greater understanding of Bible truth in the late 1800’s? (b) Describe Brother Russell’s quest for the truth.

15. (a) When did Christians come under the yoke of Babylon the Great? (b) What questions remain for the next article to answer?



They Broke Free From False Religion

“Get out of her, my people.”—REV. 18:4.

SONGS: 72, 82

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What bold stand did the early Bible Students take relative to Babylon the Great?

Why did Jehovah’s servants need correction and discipline during World War I, but what does that not indicate?

When were the anointed freed from Babylonian captivity?

IN THE preceding article, we learned how faithful Christians found themselves in a form of Babylonian captivity. The good news, though, is that they would not remain in that condition indefinitely. God’s command “Get out of her, my people” would be meaningless if no one could ever escape the influence of the world empire of false religion. **(Read Revelation 18:4.)** We are eager to learn when God’s people were completely freed from Babylon’s clutches! But first, we must answer the following questions: What stand regarding Babylon the Great did the Bible Students take prior to 1914? How active were our brothers in the preaching work during World War I? Is there a connection between their need for correction and discipline during that time and their being held in Babylonian captivity?

“THE FALL OF BABYLON”

² In the decades leading up to World War I, Charles Taze Russell and his associates realized that the organizations of

1. On what basis could God’s people hope to be liberated from Babylon the Great, and what questions will we examine?
2. What position did the early Bible Students take regarding false religion as they understood it?

Christendom were not teaching Bible truth. Accordingly, they resolved to have nothing to do with false religion as they understood it. As early as November of 1879, *Zion's Watch Tower* straightforwardly set out their Scriptural position by stating: "Every church claiming to be a chaste virgin espoused to Christ, but in reality united to and supported by the world (beast) we must condemn as being in scripture language a *harlot church*," a reference to Babylon the Great.—**Read Revelation 17:1, 2.**

³ God-fearing men and women knew what they must do. They could not expect to receive God's blessing if they continued to support false religious organizations. Consequently, many Bible Students prepared letters of withdrawal from their churches. In some cases, they read the letters publicly at church meetings. Where a public reading was forbidden, some sent copies to every member of the church. They wanted no further dealings with false religion! In another era, such a bold move would have cost them dearly. But in many countries in the late 1800's, the church was beginning to lose the backing of the State. Without fear of reprisals in such countries, citizens were free to discuss religious matters and to disagree openly with the established churches.

⁴ The Bible Students understood that it was not enough for them to inform relatives, close friends, and church mem-

3. What decisive action did the Bible Students take, showing that they understood the need to separate themselves from false religion? (See opening picture.)

4. During World War I, what was the relationship between God's people and Babylon the Great?

bers of their stand on false religion. The whole world needed to see Babylon the Great for what it is—a religious prostitute! Accordingly, between December 1917 and early 1918, the few thousand Bible Students zealously distributed 10,000,000 copies of a tract featuring the subject "The Fall of Babylon"—a hard-hitting indictment of Christendom. As you can imagine, the clergy were furious; but undeterred, the Bible Students kept right on with this important work. They were determined to obey "God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) What can we conclude? That far from becoming enslaved to Babylon the Great during the war, these Christian men and women were breaking free from its influence and were helping others to do so.

ZEALOUS ACTIVITY DURING WORLD WAR I

⁵ In years gone by, we believed that Jehovah became displeased with his people because they did not have a zealous share in the preaching work during World War I. We concluded that for this reason, Jehovah allowed Babylon the Great to take them captive for a short time. However, faithful brothers and sisters who served God during the 1914-1918 period later made it clear that as a whole the Lord's people did everything they could to keep the preaching work going. There is strong evidence to support this testimony. A more accurate understanding of our theocratic history has led to a clearer comprehension of certain events recorded in the Bible.

5. What testimony is there that the brothers were very zealous during World War I?



Those Bible Students were zealous!
(See paragraphs 6, 7)

⁶ In actual fact, the Bible Students who were on hand during World War I (1914-1918) gave a tremendous witness during that time. It was not easy for them to do so, for several reasons. We will consider two of them. First of all, the main work being done in those days involved the distribution of Bible literature. When the book *The Finished Mystery* was banned by the secular authorities in early 1918, preaching became difficult for many of the brothers. They had not yet learned to preach using the Bible alone, and they had been counting on *The Finished Mystery* to “do the talking” for them. A second factor involved the devastating outbreak of the Spanish Influenza in 1918. The pervasiveness of that dreadful plague made it difficult for publishers to move about freely. In spite of these and other challenges, however, the Bible Students as a whole did their best to keep the work going.

⁷ In 1914 alone, the small number of

6, 7. (a) What challenges did the Bible Students need to overcome during World War I? (b) Give examples illustrating the zeal of the Bible Students.

Bible Students presented the “Photo-Drama of Creation” to more than 9,000,000 people. The Drama, as it was called, combined pictures and slides synchronized with sound and traced man’s history from the time of creation to the end of the Millennium. It was an outstanding achievement at the time. Think of it. The number of people who saw that presentation in 1914 alone was greater than the total number of Kingdom publishers active in the world today! Reports further indicate that in 1916 a total of 809,393 attended public meetings in the United States, and in 1918 the number rose to 949,444. Those Bible Students were zealous!

⁸ During the first world war, no effort was spared to keep providing spiritual food and encouragement to the scattered Bible Students. These provisions gave the brothers the strength to carry on the preaching work. Richard H. Barber, who was active during that time, recalled: “We succeeded in keeping a few traveling overseers going and in keeping

8. How were the spiritual needs of the brothers met during the first world war?

The Watch Tower in circulation and having it sent into Canada where it was banned. I had the privilege of mailing pocket-size copies of *The Finished Mystery* to a number of friends who had lost their copy due to confiscation. Brother Rutherford requested that we arrange conventions in several cities in the western United States and send speakers to try to encourage the friends as much as possible.”

SOME REFINING NEEDED

⁹ Not everything the Bible Students did during the period between 1914 and 1919 was in harmony with Scriptural principles. Although they were sincere, the brothers did not always have a proper view of subjection to the secular governments. (Rom. 13:1) Therefore, as a group, they were not always neutral with regard to the war effort. For example, when the president of the United States decreed that May 30, 1918, would be set aside as a day of prayer for peace, *The Watch Tower* urged the Bible Students to join in the observance. Some brothers purchased bonds to provide financial assistance to the war effort, and a few even went into the trenches with guns and bayonets. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the Bible Students were first taken into captivity to Babylon the Great because they needed correction and discipline. On the contrary, they understood their obligation to separate themselves from false religion, and during World War I, the break with that world empire was almost complete.—**Read Luke 12:47, 48.**

9. (a) Why did God’s people need correction and discipline between 1914 and 1919? (b) Of what was the need for discipline not an indication?

¹⁰ While they did not understand every aspect of Christian neutrality as clearly as we do today, the Bible Students did know one thing: The Bible forbids the taking of human life. So even those few brothers who took up arms and entered the trenches during World War I resolutely refused to use those arms to kill another human. Some who refused to kill were sent to the front lines, with the expectation that they would lose their life.

¹¹ The Devil was clearly angry about the stand the brothers were taking with regard to the war, as imperfect as that stand was. As a result, he framed “trouble in the name of the law.” (Ps. 94:20) Major-General James Franklin Bell of the U.S. Army revealed in a conversation with Brothers J. F. Rutherford and W. E. Van Amburgh that the U.S. Department of Justice had tried to introduce a bill in Congress that would allow the death sentence to be imposed on individuals who refused to take up arms in the war. He meant the Bible Students in particular. In the heat of anger, General Bell said to Brother Rutherford: “That bill did not pass because [U.S. President] Wilson prevented it; but we know how to get you, and *we are going to do it!*”

¹² The authorities made good on that threat. As representatives of the Watch Tower Society, Brothers Rutherford, Van Amburgh, and six others were arrested.

10. What firm stand did the Bible Students take with regard to the sacredness of life?

11. How did the secular authorities react to the Bible Students’ Scriptural stand on armed conflict?

12, 13. (a) Why were eight responsible brothers sentenced to long prison terms? (b) Did incarceration break the brothers’ determination to obey Jehovah? Explain.

When passing sentence, the judge in the case declared: “The religious propaganda in which these men are engaged is more harmful than a division of German soldiers . . . They have not only called in question the law officers of the Government and the army intelligence bureau but have *denounced all the ministers of all the churches*. Their punishment should be severe.” (*Faith on the March*, by A. H. Macmillan, p. 99) It was. The eight Bible Students were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia. When the war ended, however, they were released and the charges against them were dropped.

¹³ Even while in prison, the eight men held steadfastly to the Scriptures as they understood them. In a petition for clemency addressed to the president of the United States, they wrote: “The Lord’s will is as announced in the Scriptures, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and therefore any member of the [International Bible Students] Association so consecrated unto the Lord who would willingly violate his covenant of consecration would forfeit for himself God’s favor, even to his complete destruction. Hence such members could not willingly and conscientiously engage in the taking of the life of human beings.” Bold words those! Clearly, the brothers had no intention of compromising!

FREEDOM AT LAST!

¹⁴ **Malachi 3:1-3** describes the time—from 1914 to early 1919—when the anointed “sons of Levi” would undergo a period of refinement. (**Read.**) Dur-

14. Describe from the Scriptures what took place from 1914 to 1919.

ing that time, Jehovah God, “the true Lord,” accompanied by Jesus Christ, “the messenger of the covenant,” came to the spiritual temple to inspect those serving there. After receiving needed discipline, Jehovah’s cleansed people were ready to take up a further assignment of service. In 1919, a “faithful and discreet slave” was appointed to provide spiritual food to the household of faith. (Matt. 24:45) God’s people were now free of the influence of Babylon the Great. Since that time, by Jehovah’s undeserved kindness, his people have constantly been growing in knowledge of God’s will and in love for their heavenly Father. How grateful they are for his blessing!^[1]

¹⁵ How exhilarating it is to have been released from captivity to Babylon the Great! Satan’s effort to eradicate true Christianity from the earth has failed miserably. However, we must not miss the purpose for which Jehovah has granted us this freedom. (2 Cor. 6:1) Multitudes of sincere individuals are still being held captive by false religion. They need to be shown the way out. We can guide them. By all means, then, in imitation of our brothers in the past century, let us do all we can to help them get free!

15. How should our release from Babylon the Great affect us?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 14) There are many similarities between the Jewish captivity of 70 years in Babylon and what happened to Christians after the apostasy developed. However, the Jewish captivity does not appear to be a prophetic type of what happened to Christians. For one thing, the length of captivity is different. So we should not try to look for prophetic parallels in every detail of the Jewish captivity as if these should somehow apply to what happened to anointed Christians in the years leading up to 1919.

“Kingdom Publishers in Britain—Wake Up!!”

IT CAME as a clarion call: “Kingdom Publishers in Britain—Wake Up!!” (*Informant*,* December 1937, London edition) The sobering subtitle added: “No Outstanding Increase in Ten Years.” A front-page service report spanning ten years from 1928 to 1937 proved the point.

TOO MANY PIONEERS?

What had caused the field ministry to lose its impetus in Britain? The congregations were apparently “in a rut,” continuing at a pace set many years before. In addition, the branch had decided that the territory could support only about 200 pioneers, who worked in isolated territories rather than with congregations. Hence, the branch had told prospective pioneers that the field in Britain had no more room and urged them to serve in other European countries. Commendably, a steady stream of pioneers left Britain for such countries as France, despite having little or no knowledge of the language.

“A CALL TO ACTION”

The 1937 *Informant* article set a challenging goal for 1938: One million hours! The goal could easily be met if publishers would devote 15 hours a month to the ministry and pioneers, 110 hours. Suggestions included organizing field service groups for five-hour days and focusing on making return visits, particularly during midweek evenings.

This renewed emphasis on the ministry thrilled many. “It was a call to action from headquarters, which most of us had been longing for and which soon brought wonderful results,” recalled Hilda



Enthusiastic pioneers zealously focused on the field ministry

Padgett.* Sister E. F. Wallis reported: “The five-hour day suggestion was grand! What greater joy could there be than putting in whole days at a time in the Lord’s service? . . . We returned tired, maybe, but joyful? I’ll say!” Young Stephen Miller felt the sense of urgency and responded to the call. He wanted to do it while he had the opportunity! He remembered groups on bicycles spending whole days in the ministry and in the summer evenings playing recorded talks. They zealously shared in information marches with placards and did street witnessing with magazines.

The *Informant* also issued this fresh appeal: “We need a pioneer army of 1,000.” A new territory policy meant that pioneers no longer worked separately from the congregations but along with them, supporting and building them up. “A lot of the brothers were waking up to the fact that they needed to pioneer,” remembers Joyce Ellis (née

* Later called *Our Kingdom Ministry*.

* *The Watchtower* of October 1, 1995, pp. 19-24, contains Sister Padgett’s life story.



New pioneers flooded into the field in Britain

Barber). “Although I was only 13 at the time,” she says, “that was what I wanted to do; I wanted to pioneer.” She achieved her goal in July 1940, at age 15. Peter, who later became Joyce’s husband, heard the “Wake Up” call, prompting him to “start thinking about pioneering.” In June 1940, at age 17, he cycled 65 miles (105 km) to Scarborough to take up his new pioneer assignment.

Cyril and Kitty Johnson were typical of self-sacrificing new pioneers. They decided to sell their home and goods to fund their full-time ministry. Cyril quit his job, and within a month they were ready to start pioneering. He recalled: “We were quite confident about this. We did it willingly and happily.”

PIONEER HOMES OPENED

As the number of pioneers increased sharply, responsible brothers considered practical ways to support this growing army. Jim Carr, serving as a zone servant (now known as a circuit overseer) in 1938, followed the suggestion to set up pioneer homes in cities. Groups of pioneers were encouraged to live and work together, thus cutting costs.

In Sheffield, they rented a large house, to be overseen by a responsible brother. The local congregation contributed funds and furniture. Jim recalled: “Everyone worked to make it a success.” Ten hardworking pioneers lived there, keeping up a good spiritual routine. “The [day’s] text was discussed each morning at the breakfast table,” and “the pioneers went daily to their territory in various parts of the city.”

Publishers and pioneers alike responded to the call, reaching the goal of one million hours in 1938. In fact, reports show increases in all areas of field activity. In a five-year period, Britain’s publisher figures almost tripled. The renewed focus on Kingdom service strengthened Jehovah’s people to face the challenging war years that lay ahead.

Today, Britain’s pioneer ranks are increasing again, as God’s war of Armageddon approaches. Pioneer numbers have reached new peaks over the last ten years, reaching 13,224 in October 2015. These pioneers are fully awake to the fact that the full-time ministry is one of the best ways to spend their lives.



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