

SEPTEMBER 2016

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:  
OCTOBER 24–NOVEMBER 27, 2016



COVER IMAGE:

## FIJI

Brothers and sisters in rural areas outside of Suva, the capital of Fiji, happily share the good news with all whom they encounter

POPULATION

887,027

PUBLISHERS

3,097

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE  
(2015)

11,845

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# “Do Not Let Your Hands Drop Down”

*“Do not let your hands drop down.”—ZEPH. 3:16.*

A SISTER who is a regular pioneer and is married to an elder, says: “Despite maintaining a good spiritual routine, I have struggled with anxiety for many years. It robs me of sleep, impacts my health, affects the way I treat others, and sometimes makes me want to give up and crawl into a hole.”

<sup>2</sup> Can you understand that sister’s feelings? Sadly, life in Satan’s wicked world creates a tremendous amount of pressure, which can cause anxiety and thus make a person feel weighed down. That can be like an anchor attached to a boat, not allowing the boat to move forward. (Prov. 12:25) What could cause you to feel that way? Well, maybe you are trying to cope with the death of a loved one, deal with a serious illness, provide for your family in these hard economic times, or you may be facing opposition. The resulting emotional stress might in time drain your strength. It could even cause you to lose your joy. But you can be assured that God is ready to give you a helping hand.—**Read Isaiah 41:10, 13.**

<sup>3</sup> The Bible often uses parts of the human body to illustrate

1, 2. (a) What kinds of problems do many face today, and with what result? (b) What sure hope is held out at Isaiah 41:10, 13?

3, 4. (a) How does the Bible use the word “hands”? (b) What might cause our hands to drop down?

SONGS: 81, 32

## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How did Jehovah strengthen the hands of Moses, Asa, and Nehemiah?

How does Jehovah strengthen our hands today?

In what practical ways can we strengthen the hands of our brothers and sisters?



different characteristics or actions. The hand, for example, is mentioned hundreds of times. To strengthen one's hands can have the sense of being encouraged, fortified, and empowered for action. (1 Sam. 23:16, ftn.; Ezra 1:6, ftn.) It can imply having a positive and hopeful view of the future.

<sup>4</sup> To let the figurative hands drop down has at times been used to describe someone who is discouraged, disheartened, or without hope. (2 Chron. 15:7, ftn.; Heb. 12:12) It is common for a person in that situation to give up. If you face circumstances that bring you stress or make you feel weighed down physically, emotionally, or even spiritually, where can you receive the needed courage? How can you be motivated and strengthened to endure and have joy?

#### **“THE HAND OF JEHOVAH IS NOT TOO SHORT TO SAVE”**

<sup>5</sup> **Read Zephaniah 3:16, 17.** Rather than give in to fear and discouragement, which is like letting our hands drop down, we are invited by our caring Father, Jehovah, to ‘throw all our anxiety on him.’ (1 Pet. 5:7) We can take to heart what God told the Israelites, that his mighty ‘hand is not too short to save’ his loyal servants. (Isa. 59:1) We will discuss three outstanding Bible examples that show Jehovah’s desire and ability to strengthen his people to do his will despite seemingly overwhelming difficulties. See how these examples can build you up.

<sup>6</sup> Soon after the Israelites were mirac-

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5. (a) When problems arise, what might we do, but of what should we remind ourselves? (b) What will we discuss?

6, 7. What vital lessons can we learn from Israel’s victory over the Amalekites?

ulously released from slavery in Egypt, the Amalekites attacked them. Following Moses’ direction, courageous Joshua led the Israelites into battle. In the meantime, Moses took Aaron and Hur to a nearby hillside from which they could see the battlefield. Were those three men running from the battle out of fear? Absolutely not!

<sup>7</sup> Moses put into action a plan that proved to be the key to their success. Moses kept his hands and the rod of the true God lifted up toward heaven. As long as Moses did that, Jehovah empowered the hands of the Israelites to fight successfully against the Amalekites. However, when Moses’ hands became heavy and began to drop down, the Amalekites started to win. Acting with decisiveness, Aaron and Hur “took a stone and put it under [Moses], and he sat on it. Then Aaron and Hur, one on each side, supported his hands, so that his hands remained steady until the sun set.” Yes, God’s mighty hand enabled the Israelites to win the battle.—Ex. 17: 8-13.

<sup>8</sup> Jehovah also proved that his hand was not too short in King Asa’s day. Many battles are mentioned in the Bible. But the largest army assembled was that of Zerah the Ethiopian. He had 1,000,000 experienced soldiers. The Ethiopians outnumbered Asa’s army nearly 2 to 1. You can imagine how easy it would have been for Asa to become anxious and fearful and to let his hands drop down in defeat. Instead, Asa immediately turned to Jehovah for help. From a military point of view, it would seem im-

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8. (a) How did Asa respond when the Ethiopians were threatening Judah? (b) How can we imitate the way Asa depended on God?

possible to overcome the Ethiopians, yet “with God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26) God displayed his great power and “defeated the Ethiopians before Asa,” whose “heart was complete with Jehovah all his life.”—2 Chron. 14: 8-13; 1 Ki. 15:14.

<sup>9</sup> Imagine how Nehemiah must have felt when he went to Jerusalem. The city was almost defenseless, and his fellow Jews were very discouraged. The threats from foreign opposers caused the Jews to slacken their hands, to cease rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls. Did Nehemiah allow that situation to cause him to drop his hands in discouragement too? No! Like Moses, Asa, and other faithful servants of Jehovah, Nehemiah had already developed a pattern of relying on Jehovah in prayer. And this time was no different. In the face of what to the Jews might have seemed overwhelming obstacles, Jehovah responded to Nehemiah’s sincere plea for help. God used his “great power” and “mighty hand” to strengthen the Jews’ drooping hands. **(Read Nehemiah 1:10; 2:17-20; 6:9.)** Do you believe that Jehovah uses his “great power” and “mighty hand” to strengthen his servants today?

### JEHOVAH WILL STRENGTHEN YOUR HANDS

<sup>10</sup> We can be sure that the Devil will never let his hands drop down in his efforts to stop our Christian activities. He

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9. (a) What did not prevent Nehemiah from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem? (b) How did God respond to Nehemiah’s prayer?

10, 11. (a) How does Satan try to cause us to let our hands drop down? (b) What does Jehovah use to strengthen us and give us power? (c) How have you benefited from theocratic education and training?

uses lies and threats from governments, religious leaders, and apostates. What is his goal? It is to cause our hands to slacken in the work of preaching the Kingdom good news. However, Jehovah is able and willing to give us strength by means of his holy spirit. (1 Chron. 29: 12) It is vital that we draw on that spirit so that we can face any challenge that Satan and his wicked system thrust upon us. (Ps. 18:39; 1 Cor. 10:13) Also, we can be grateful that we have God’s Word, which is a product of holy spirit. Think, too, about the spiritual food based on the Bible that we receive each month. The words of **Zechariah 8:9, 13 (read)** were spoken while the temple in Jerusalem was being rebuilt, and those words are very fitting for us.

<sup>11</sup> We are also made stronger by divine education at our Christian meetings, assemblies, conventions, and in our theocratic schools. That training can help us to have the proper motivation, to set spiritual goals, and to fulfill our many Christian responsibilities. (Ps. 119:32) Do you eagerly seek to gain strength from that type of education?

<sup>12</sup> Jehovah helped the Israelites to defeat the Amalekites and the Ethiopians, and he gave Nehemiah and his associates the power to complete the rebuilding work. God will similarly give us strength to stand firm against opposition, apathy, and anxiety so that we can carry out our preaching work. (1 Pet. 5: 10) We do not expect Jehovah to perform miracles for us. Rather, we should do our part. That includes our reading God’s Word daily, preparing for and attending the meetings weekly, feeding

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12. What must we do to stay spiritually strong?

our mind and heart through personal study and family worship, and always relying on Jehovah in prayer. Let us never allow other pursuits and activities to interfere with the means that Jehovah uses to strengthen and encourage us. If you sense that your hands have dropped down in any of these areas, ask for God's help. Then see how his spirit "energizes you, giving you both the desire and the power to act." (Phil. 2:13) What, though, can you do to strengthen the hands of others?

### **STRENGTHEN HANDS THAT MAY HANG DOWN**

<sup>13</sup> Jehovah gives us a worldwide brotherhood of caring worshippers who can offer us encouragement. Recall that the apostle Paul wrote: "Strengthen the hands that hang down and the feeble knees, and keep making straight paths for your feet." (Heb. 12:12, 13) Many in the first century received that sort of spiritual strengthening. It is similar today. After one brother lost his wife in death and he faced other painful circumstances, he said: "I learned that we cannot choose our tests, neither their time nor their frequency. Prayer and personal study have been like a life jacket that has kept my head above water. And the support of my spiritual brothers and sisters has brought me much comfort. I have come to realize the importance of developing a good personal relationship with Jehovah before difficult situations arise."

<sup>14</sup> Aaron and Hur literally supported Moses' hands during a battle. As for

13, 14. (a) How was one brother strengthened after his wife died? (b) In what ways can we strengthen others?

us, we can look for ways to support and to give practical aid to others. To whom? To those battling the effects of old age, health limitations, opposition from their family, loneliness, or the loss of a loved one. We can also strengthen young ones who are facing pressure to share in wrongdoing or to seek "success" in this system of things, whether academically, financially, or professionally. (1 Thess. 3:1-3; 5:11, 14) Look for ways to show genuine interest in others at the Kingdom Hall, in the ministry, while enjoying a meal together, or as you converse on the telephone.

<sup>15</sup> Following Asa's stunning victory, the prophet Azariah encouraged him and his people with the words: "But you, be strong and do not let your hands drop, for your activity will be rewarded." (2 Chron. 15:7, ftn.) This moved Asa to make many changes so as to restore pure worship. In a similar way, your positive words can deeply affect others. You can thus help them to serve Jehovah more fully. (Prov. 15:23) And at the meetings, never overlook the powerful effect you can have on others by raising your hand and offering up-building comments.

<sup>16</sup> With Jehovah's backing, Nehemiah and those with him strengthened their hands for the work. They then completed Jerusalem's walls in just 52 days! (Neh. 2:18, ftn.; 6:15, 16) Nehemiah did not simply oversee the work. He was personally involved in rebuilding Je-

15. What effect can positive words have on fellow Christians?

16. Like Nehemiah, how can elders strengthen the hands of those in the congregation? Give examples of how fellow believers have helped you personally.

rusalem's walls. (Neh. 5:16) Similarly, many loving elders have been able to imitate Nehemiah by assisting on theocratic construction projects or by cleaning and maintaining their local Kingdom Hall. By working along with fellow publishers in the ministry and by making shepherding visits, they also strengthen the weak hands of those who are anxious at heart.—**Read Isaiah 35:3, 4.**

**“DO NOT LET YOUR HANDS  
DROP DOWN”**

<sup>17</sup> Serving shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters promotes unity. It also builds lasting friendships and increases mutual confidence in the com-

<sup>17, 18.</sup> When we face problems or are anxious, we can be sure of what?

ing blessings under God's Kingdom. As we strengthen the hands of others, we help them to battle discouraging circumstances and to maintain a positive and hopeful view of the future. Moreover, doing that for others helps us to keep our spiritual focus and to feel the reality of what God has in store for us. Yes, it strengthens our hands too.

<sup>18</sup> Seeing how Jehovah on different occasions supported and protected his faithful servants in the past should build our faith and trust in him today. So when you face pressures and problems, “do not let your hands drop down”! Instead, reach out to Jehovah in prayer, and allow his mighty hand to strengthen you and lead you to Kingdom blessings.—Ps. 73:23, 24.

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Each one in the congregation can be a source of encouragement to others  
(See paragraph 14)







## Keep Contending for Jehovah's Blessing

*“You have contended with God and with men and you have at last prevailed.”—GEN. 32:28.*

SONGS: 60, 38

### WHAT LESSONS CAN WE LEARN FROM . . .

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Jacob and Rachel?

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Joseph?

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Paul?

FROM the first faithful human, Abel, down to our day, loyal worshippers have struggled. The apostle Paul wrote to Hebrew Christians that they “endured a great struggle along with sufferings,” as they sought Jehovah’s approval and blessing. (Heb. 10:32-34) Paul compared the struggles of Christians to the exertion of athletes contending in Greek contests, such as footracing, wrestling, and boxing. (Heb. 12: 1, 4) Today, we are in the race for life, and we face opponents who want to distract us, trip us up, beat us down, and snatch away our joy and future rewards.

<sup>2</sup> First, we have an intense struggle (or, “wrestling,” *ftn.*) against Satan and his wicked world. (Eph. 6:12) It is vital that we resist being affected by the world’s “strongly entrenched things.” These include its doctrines, philosophies, and harmful practices, such as committing immorality, using tobacco, and abusing alcohol and drugs. And we must constantly fight against our fleshly weaknesses and discouragement.—2 Cor. 10:3-6; Col. 3:5-9.

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1, 2. What challenges must servants of Jehovah confront?



<sup>3</sup> Is it really possible to defeat such powerful opponents? Yes, but not without a struggle. Drawing on the example of a boxer of ancient times, Paul said of himself: “The way I am aiming my blows is so as not to be striking the air.” (1 Cor. 9:26) Just as a boxer fights off his opponent, we must fend off our enemies. Jehovah trains us and helps us in our fight. He provides lifesaving instructions in his Word. He also helps us through our Bible-based publications, Christian meetings, assemblies, and conventions. Are you putting into practice what you are learning? If you failed to do so, it would be like “striking the air,” not fully opposing your enemy.

<sup>4</sup> Our enemies may attack us when we least expect it and kick us when we are at our lowest point, so we must ever remain alert. The Bible warns us: “Do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good.” (Rom. 12:21) The encouragement not to let ourselves “be conquered by the evil” shows that we *can* defeat evil. We can do so if we keep on fighting against it. In contrast, we could be overcome by Satan, his evil world, and our imperfect flesh if we let our guard down and quit fighting. Never allow Satan to intimidate you into dropping your hands in defeat!—1 Pet. 5:9.

<sup>5</sup> To be successful, those who are contending must not lose sight of their reason for struggling. To gain God’s approval and blessing, they should keep

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3. How does God train us to fight our enemies?

4. How do we avoid being conquered by the evil?

5. (a) What can help us to continue in our struggle to gain God’s blessing? (b) Which Bible characters will we consider?

focused on the assurance that we read at Hebrews 11:6: “Whoever approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.” The Greek verb translated “earnestly seeking” is a form that implies intensity and concerted effort. (Acts 15:17) The Scriptures provide us with fine examples of men and women who put forth concerted effort to seek Jehovah’s blessing. Jacob, Rachel, Joseph, and Paul faced circumstances that were emotionally and physically draining, yet they proved that perseverance leads to rich blessings. How can we imitate these four outstanding contenders?

#### PERSEVERANCE LEADS TO BLESSINGS

<sup>6</sup> The patriarch Jacob struggled and persevered because he loved Jehovah, appreciated spiritual things, and had complete faith in Jehovah’s promise to bless his offspring. (Gen. 28:3, 4) This explains why Jacob when nearly 100 years old did everything in his power to obtain God’s blessing; he even wrestled with a materialized angel. (**Read Genesis 32:24-28.**) Did Jacob of himself have the strength and endurance needed to contend with a powerful angel? Of course not! But he was a very determined contender, and he proved that he would not turn aside from the challenge! And he was, indeed, rewarded for his perseverance. He received the fitting name Israel, (meaning “Contender [Perseverer] With God” or “God Contends”). Jacob gained the rich reward that we too are seeking—Jehovah’s approval and blessing.

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6. What helped Jacob to persevere, and how was he rewarded? (See opening picture.)

<sup>7</sup> Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel, was just as eager to see how Jehovah would fulfill his promise to her husband. But there was what seemed to be a hurdle that could not be overcome. She had no children. In her day, that situation was viewed as a great affliction. How did Rachel find the emotional and physical strength to continue battling against circumstances that were discouraging but completely beyond her control? She never gave up hope. Rather, she kept contending by praying with more intensity. Jehovah heard Rachel's heartfelt supplications, and she was eventually blessed with children. Understandably, Rachel at one point cried out in triumph: "With strenuous wrestlings I have wrestled . . . I have also come off the winner!"—Gen. 30:8, 20-24.

<sup>8</sup> The steadfast example set by Jacob and Rachel no doubt had a powerful effect on their son Joseph, influencing how he would handle tests of his own faith. When Joseph was 17 years old, his life was turned completely upside down. Out of jealousy, his brothers sold him into slavery. He later had to endure years of unjust imprisonment in Egypt. (Gen. 37:23-28; 39:7-9, 20-21) Joseph did not give in to discouragement; nor was he so filled with resentment that he sought revenge. Instead, he focused his mind and heart on his blessed relationship with Jehovah. (Lev. 19:18; Rom. 12:17-21) Joseph's example should help us. For example, even if we had a difficult childhood or if our present cir-

cumstances seem hopeless, we need to keep contending and persevering. We can trust that if we do so, Jehovah will bless us.—**Read Genesis 39:21-23.**

<sup>9</sup> Think of a situation that you are facing and that may be a trial for you. Perhaps it is some type of injustice, prejudice, or ridicule. Or the trial you face may be that someone falsely accuses you, perhaps out of jealousy. Rather than drop your hands in defeat, remember what enabled Jacob, Rachel, and Joseph to continue serving Jehovah with joy. God strengthened and blessed them because they kept on showing deep appreciation for spiritual things. They kept on contending and acting in harmony with their earnest prayers. We are living close to the end of the present wicked system of things; thus, we have strong reason to hold on to the firm hope set before us! Are you willing to exert yourself to gain Jehovah's favor and, as it were, wrestle for it?

### **BE WILLING TO WRESTLE FOR A BLESSING**

<sup>10</sup> What are some circumstances that might call upon us to wrestle for God's blessing? One circumstance that many have faced is the struggle to overcome a fleshly weakness. Others have had to put forth determined effort to maintain a positive view of the ministry. Or in your case, it may be the need to keep enduring, even though you have poor health or are lonely. We should also not

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7. (a) What distressing situation did Rachel face? (b) How did she keep contending and eventually get blessed?

8. Joseph experienced what long and difficult challenge, and how did his response set a good example for us?

9. In imitating Jacob, Rachel, and Joseph, we should put forth what effort to receive Jehovah's blessing?

10, 11. (a) How might we have to wrestle for God's blessing? (b) What will enable us to make the right choices and win our fight against discouragement and distractions?



Are you wrestling for God's blessing?

(See paragraphs 10, 11)

overlook the struggle some have to forgive someone who has offended them or has sinned against them. No matter how long we have been serving Jehovah, all of us must fight against things that might hinder our service to God, who rewards the faithful.

<sup>11</sup> Frankly, it can be a real struggle to make the right choices and to follow the Christian course. That is especially so if our treacherous heart tugs us in the opposite direction. (Jer. 17:9) If you realize that you have to some extent been affected in a negative way, by all means pray for holy spirit. Prayer and holy spirit can give you energy to pursue the course that you know to be right and that Jehovah can bless. Act on your

prayers. Try to read a portion of the Bible each day, and make time for personal study as well as regular Family Worship sessions.—**Read Psalm 119:32.**

<sup>12</sup> There are many examples of how God's Word, his spirit, and our Christian publications have helped Christians to overcome wrong desires. One teenager read the article "How Can You Resist Wrong Desires?" published in the *Awake!* of December 8, 2003. What was his reaction? "I am fighting to control improper thoughts. When I read in the article that 'for many, the battle to overcome wrong desires is especially intense,' it made me feel part of the brotherhood.

12, 13. How were two Christians helped to control wrong desires?

I felt that I was not alone.” This young person also benefited from the article “Alternative Life-Styles—Does God Approve?” which appeared in the issue of October 8, 2003. He noted that it mentioned that for some the battle is “a thorn in the flesh.” (2 Cor. 12:7) While they continue battling to maintain righteous conduct, they can look to the future with optimism. “For that reason,” he said, “I think that as each day passes, I can remain faithful. I am very grateful to Jehovah for using his organization to help us survive each day in this wicked system.”

<sup>13</sup> Consider also the experience of a sister in the United States. She writes: “I want to thank you for always feeding us with just what we need and at the right time. I often feel that these articles are written just for me. For years, I have been battling a strong desire for something Jehovah hates. At times, I want to throw my hands up and stop fighting. I know that Jehovah is merciful and forgiving, but because I have this wrong desire and deep down I don’t hate it, I feel that I am unable to receive his help. This ongoing battle has affected every aspect of my life. . . . After reading the article ‘Do You Have “a Heart to Know” Jehovah?’ in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2013, I really felt that Jehovah does want to help me.”

<sup>14</sup> **Read Romans 7:21-25.** Paul knew firsthand how difficult it can be to struggle against the desires and weaknesses of the imperfect flesh. However, he had full confidence that he could win his internal battle by prayerfully relying on Jehovah

and exercising faith in Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. What about us? As we struggle against giving in to our own fleshly weaknesses, we can succeed. How? By imitating Paul, by fully relying on Jehovah and not on our own strength, and by having faith in the ransom.

<sup>15</sup> There are times when God may allow us to demonstrate the depth of our concern about a matter. For instance, what if we (or a family member) were stricken by a serious illness or we were faced with some injustice? We would show our full trust in Jehovah by supplicating him in prayer to give us the strength to keep faithful and not lose our joy and spiritual balance. (Phil. 4:13) The experience of many, both in Paul’s day and in ours, proves that prayer can help us to renew our power and build up confidence to continue enduring.

### KEEP CONTENDING FOR JEHOVAH’S BLESSING

<sup>16</sup> The Devil would really like to see you give up and drop your hands in defeat. Be determined to “hold fast to what is fine.” (1 Thess. 5:21) Be assured that you can win the fight against Satan, his wicked world, and any sinful leanings. You can do so by completely trusting in God’s ability to strengthen you. —2 Cor. 4:7-9; Gal. 6:9.

<sup>17</sup> By all means, keep fighting. Keep struggling. Keep contending. Keep persevering. Have full confidence that Jehovah will “pour out on you a blessing until there is nothing lacking.”—Mal. 3:10.

14. (a) How did Paul feel about his struggles?  
(b) How can we successfully battle against fleshly weaknesses?

15. Why can prayer help us to keep faithful and to endure trials?

16, 17. What is your resolve as a contender?



## What is “the word of God” that Hebrews 4:12 says “is alive and exerts power”?

■ The context shows that the apostle Paul was referring to the message, or expression of God’s purpose, such as we find in the Bible.

Hebrews 4:12 is often cited in our publications to show that the Bible has power to change lives, and it is perfectly proper to make that application. However, it is helpful to view Hebrews 4:12 in its broad context. Paul was urging Hebrew Christians to cooperate with God’s purposes. Many of those were set out in the holy writings. Paul used as an example the Israelites who had been saved out of Egypt. They had the prospect of entering the promised land “flowing with milk and honey,” where they could enjoy true rest. —Ex. 3:8; Deut. 12:9, 10.

That was God’s expressed purpose. Yet, the Israelites later hardened their hearts and did not exercise faith, so most of them failed to enter into that rest. (Num. 14:30; Josh. 14:6-10) However, Paul added that there was still “a promise of entering into [God’s] rest.” (Heb. 3:16-19; 4:1) That “promise” clearly is *part* of God’s expressed purpose. As did the Hebrew Christians, we can read

of and cooperate with that purpose. To underscore that this promise is based on the Scriptures, Paul quoted parts of Genesis 2:2 and Psalm 95:11.

Certainly, it should touch us that “a promise of entering into [God’s] rest *remains*.” We trust that the Bible-based prospect of entering into God’s rest is really possible, and we have taken steps to enter. We have not done that by striving to keep the Mosaic Law or to earn Jehovah’s approval by other works. Rather, in faith we have happily cooperated with and continue to cooperate with God’s revealed purpose. In addition, as noted above, thousands of people around the globe have begun to study the Bible and to learn of the expressions of God’s purpose. Many of them are moved to change their lifestyle, to exercise faith, and to become baptized Christians. The way they are being affected is clear proof that “the word of God is alive and exerts power.” God’s expressed purpose, as outlined in the Bible, has already affected our life, and it will continue to exert power in our life.

“The word of God is alive”



# Defending the Good News Before High Officials



“THIS man is a chosen vessel to me to bear my name to the nations as well as to kings.” (Acts 9: 15) The Lord Jesus said that about a new convert to Christianity, the Jewish man who became known as the apostle Paul.

One of those “kings” was Roman Emperor Nero. How would you feel if you had to defend your faith before such a ruler? Yet, Christians are encouraged to imitate Paul. (1 Cor. 11:1) One way that we might do so has to do with Paul’s experiences with the legal systems of his day.

The Mosaic Law was the law of the land in Israel, and it was the moral code for devout Jews everywhere. After Pentecost 33 C.E., true worshippers were not obliged to keep the Mosaic Law. (Acts 15:28, 29; Gal. 4:9-11) Yet, Paul and other Christians did not speak disrespectfully of the Law; they were able to witness in many Jewish communities without interference. (1 Cor. 9: 20) In fact, on many occasions Paul went to synagogues, where he could witness to people who knew of the God of Abraham and with whom Paul could reason on the basis of the Hebrew Scriptures.—Acts 9:19, 20; 13:5, 14-16; 14:1; 17: 1, 2.

The apostles chose Jerusalem as the first center from which the preaching work would be directed. They taught regularly at the temple. (Acts 1:4; 2:46; 5:20) On occasion, Paul traveled to Jerusalem, and he was eventually taken into custody there. That began a legal process that finally led him to Rome.

## PAUL AND ROMAN LAW

How would the Roman authorities have viewed the beliefs that Paul preached? To answer that, it is useful to note how the Romans considered religions in general. They did not force the different ethnic groups of their empire to give up their religions, except when it seemed that there was a danger to the State or to morality.

Rome granted the Jews broad rights in the empire. The book *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* states: "Judaism enjoyed a privileged position in the Roman empire. . . . The Jews had free exercise of their religion and were exempted from worshipping the deities of the Roman state. They could regulate life within their own communities by their law." They also did not have to share in military service.\* Paul would use the protection that Roman law gave to the Jewish faith as he defended Christianity before Roman authorities.

Paul's opposers tried in various ways to turn the common people and the authorities against the apostle. (Acts 13:50; 14:2, 19; 18:12, 13) Consider one event. The Christian elders of the Jerusalem congregation heard a rumor being spread among the Jews that Paul was preaching "an apostasy from Moses." Such stories could lead some newly converted Jewish Christians to think that Paul did not respect God's arrangements. Also, the Sanhedrin could declare Christianity an apostasy from Judaism. If that happened, Jews who associated with Christians could be punished. They would be made social outcasts and barred from witnessing in the temple or in synagogues. Hence, the congregation elders advised Paul to prove these rumors wrong by his going to the temple and doing something that God did not require of him but that was not objectionable.—Acts 21:18-27.

Paul did that, which led to opportunities to 'defend and legally establish the good news.' (Phil. 1:7) At the temple, the Jews rioted and wanted to kill Paul. The Roman military commander took Paul into custody. When Paul was being prepared to be whipped, he revealed that he was a Roman

citizen. That led to his being taken to Caesarea, from where the Romans administered Judea. There he would have unusual opportunities to give a bold witness before the authorities. That likely introduced Christianity more fully to people who might not know much about it.

Acts chapter 24 describes Paul's trial before Felix, the Roman governor of Judea, who had already heard something about what Christians believed. The Jews charged Paul with breaking Roman law in at least three ways. They said that he promoted sedition among the Jews throughout the empire; that he led a dangerous sect; and that he was trying to profane the temple, which was then under Roman protection. (Acts 24:5, 6) Those charges could lead to his being sentenced to death.

It is of interest to Christians today to consider how Paul dealt with the charges. He stayed calm and respectful. Paul referred to the Law and the Prophets, and he claimed the right to worship 'the God of his forefathers.' That was a right that other Jews had under Roman law. (Acts 24:14) In time, Paul was able to defend and proclaim his faith before the next governor, Porcius Festus, as well as before King Herod Agrippa.

Finally, so that he could get a fair hearing, Paul said: "I appeal to Caesar!"—the most powerful ruler of that time.—Acts 25:11.

## PAUL'S TRIAL IN CAESAR'S COURT

"You must stand before Caesar," an angel later told Paul. (Acts 27:24) Roman Emperor Nero had said at the beginning of his reign that he would not judge all cases himself. During the first eight years of his rule, he generally turned the task over to others. The book *The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul* reports that when Nero accepted a case for him to judge, he heard it in his own palace, where he was aided by a group of advisers who had a lot of experience and influence.

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\* Writer James Parkes observes: "The Jews . . . had the right to retain their own observances. There was nothing exceptional in the actual giving of these privileges, for in so doing the Romans were only following their usual custom of granting the greatest possible local autonomy to the different parts of their empire."



The Bible does not say whether Nero himself heard and judged Paul or he assigned someone else to hear Paul's appeal and report to Nero. In either case, Paul likely explained that he worshipped the God of the Jews and that he urged all people to give the government due honor. (Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1, 2) It appears that Paul's defense of the good news before high officials was a success—Caesar's court freed Paul.—Phil. 2:24; Phil. 22.

#### OUR COMMISSION TO DEFEND THE GOOD NEWS

Jesus told his disciples: "You will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them and the nations." (Matt. 10:18) It is a privilege to represent Jesus in this way. Our efforts to defend the good news may result in legal victories. Of course, what imperfect men decide does not 'legally establish' the good news in a complete sense. Only God's Kingdom will bring

permanent relief from oppression and injustice.—Eccl. 8:9; Jer. 10:23.

Yet, even today Jehovah's name can be glorified when Christians make a defense of their faith. As Paul was, we should try to be calm, sincere, and convincing. Jesus told his followers that they would not have to 'rehearse beforehand how to make their defense, for he would give them words and wisdom that all their opposers together would not be able to resist or dispute.'—Luke 21:14, 15; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:15.

When Christians defend their faith before kings, governors, or other officials, they can give a witness to people whom it might otherwise have been difficult to reach with the Christian message. Some favorable court decisions have refined legal codes, thus protecting freedom of speech and of worship. But whatever the outcome of such cases, the courage God's servants display under trial makes God rejoice.

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Jehovah's name is magnified  
when we make a defense of our faith







# Does Your Style of Dress Glorify God?

*“Do all things for God’s glory.”—1 COR. 10:31.*

“YOU saw a lot of casual clothing, especially when it was hot,” reported a Dutch newspaper regarding a meeting of church leaders. “That is not the case at the convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses. . . . Boys and men wear a jacket and tie, while the girls’ and women’s skirt length is . . . in good taste, yet modern.” Indeed, Jehovah’s Witnesses are often commended for adorning “themselves in respectable dress, with modesty and good judgment . . . in the way that is proper for [those] professing devotion to God.” (1 Tim. 2:9, 10, ftn.) The apostle Paul was speaking about women, but the same basic standard applies to Christian men.

<sup>2</sup> Appropriate standards of dress are important to us as Jehovah’s people, and they are important to the God we worship. (Gen. 3:21) What the Scriptures say about dress and grooming leaves no doubt that the Sovereign of the universe has wholesome standards of attire for his true worshippers. Therefore, our choice of dress and grooming should not be determined only by what is pleasing to us. It should also take into account what is pleasing to the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

1, 2. Why do Jehovah’s Witnesses maintain high standards of dress? (See opening picture.)

**SONGS: 34, 61**

## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How does the Mosaic Law help us when we have to make decisions about dress and grooming?

How do 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Philippians 2:4 have a bearing on what we wear?

Why is modesty a key to making good decisions about dress and grooming?

<sup>3</sup> For example, in God's Law to the Israelites there were rules that protected them against the openly immoral way of life of the nations around them. The Law showed Jehovah's strong feelings against clothing that does not make clear the distinction between male and female—what has been described in our day as unisex fashion. **(Read Deuteronomy 22:5.)** From God's stated direction about clothing, we clearly see that God is not pleased with styles of dress that feminize men, that make women look like men, or that make it hard to see the difference between men and women.

<sup>4</sup> God's Word contains principles that help Christians make good decisions about how to dress. That is so no matter where they live, what their culture is, or what the climate is. We do not need detailed lists saying which styles of dress are acceptable and which are objectionable. Rather, we are guided by Scriptural principles that allow room for personal preferences. Let us consider some Bible principles that can help us determine "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" when we are deciding what to wear.—Rom. 12:1, 2.

#### **"WE RECOMMEND OURSELVES AS GOD'S MINISTERS"**

<sup>5</sup> The apostle Paul was inspired to emphasize the important principle found at **2 Corinthians 6:4. (Read.)** Our personal appearance says much about us. Many people form impressions and opinions

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3. What can we learn about clothing from God's Law to the Israelites?

4. What can help Christians to make good decisions about how to dress?

5, 6. What effect should our dress have on others?

of us by "what appears to the eyes." (1 Sam. 16:7) As God's ministers, therefore, we understand that our getting dressed is not just a matter of putting on something comfortable that we like. The principles that we glean from God's Word should move us to avoid wearing clothing that is tight-fitting, revealing, or sexually provocative. That would rule out wearing clothing that exposes or accentuates private parts of our anatomy. Nobody should feel uncomfortable or forced to look the other way when seeing how we are dressed.

<sup>6</sup> When we are neat, clean, modestly dressed, and well-groomed, people are more likely to respect us as ministers of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. And they may be attracted to the God we worship. Furthermore, our appropriate attire will reflect well on the organization we represent. As a result, others may be more likely to pay attention to our lifesaving message.

<sup>7</sup> We owe it to our holy God, to our spiritual brothers and sisters, as well as to the people in our territory to wear clothing that dignifies the message we bear and that brings glory to Jehovah. (Rom. 13:8-10) This is especially so when we are engaging in Christian activities, such as when we attend meetings or when we share in the preaching work. We should dress "in the way that is proper for [people] professing devotion to God." (1 Tim. 2:10) Of course, some clothing that is appropriate in one place may not be appropriate in another. Hence, Jehovah's people throughout the world take local customs into account so as not to cause offense.

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7, 8. When especially do we need to wear appropriate clothing?

<sup>8</sup> **Read 1 Corinthians 10:31.** When we attend assemblies and conventions, our dress needs to be appropriate and modest rather than reflect the extreme styles that may be common in the world. Even as we check in and out of a hotel, as well as when we enjoy leisure time before and after convention sessions, we want to avoid an appearance that is overly casual or slovenly. Thus we will be proud to identify ourselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses. Yes, and we will feel free to give a witness as we have an opportunity.

<sup>9</sup> **Read Philippians 2:4.** Why do Christians need to consider how their attire affects fellow worshippers? One reason is that God’s people work hard

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9, 10. Why should Philippians 2:4 have a bearing on what we wear?

to apply the Bible’s admonition: “Dead-en, therefore, your body members that are on the earth as respects sexual im-morality, uncleanness, uncontrolled sexual passion.” (Col. 3:2, 5) We would not want to make it difficult for fellow be-lievers to heed that counsel. Brothers and sisters who have given up a sexually loose lifestyle may still be fighting sin-ful leanings. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10) We would not want to make their fight harder, would we?

<sup>10</sup> When we are around our spiritu-al brothers and sisters, our manner of dress should help to make the congrega-tion a haven of moral chastity. That is so whether we are together at a meeting or in an informal setting. We have the free-dom to choose what to wear. Still, all of

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Will your style of dress generate respect for the God you represent?

(See paragraphs 7, 8)



us have a responsibility to wear clothes that make it easier for others to remain chaste and to maintain God's standards of holiness in thought, word, and conduct. (1 Pet. 1:15, 16) True love "does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests."—1 Cor. 13:4, 5.

### THE RIGHT CLOTHING FOR THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE

<sup>11</sup> When making decisions about what to wear, God's servants take into account that "there is a time for every activity and every action." (Eccl. 3:1, 17) It is understandable that different climates and the change of seasons influence what we wear. So do varying circumstances and living conditions. Jehovah's standards, however, do not fluctuate with the weather.—Mal. 3:6.

<sup>12</sup> In warmer climates, it can be particularly challenging to make sure that our style of dress is respectable and sensible and that it shows good judgment. Hence, our brothers and sisters appreciate it when we refrain from wearing clothes that are so tight or so loose that they are revealing. (Job 31:1) Also, when relaxing at the beach or at a swimming pool, the style of swimwear we use should be modest. (Prov. 11:2, 20) Even if many in the world wear revealing swimwear, we who serve Jehovah are concerned about being a credit to the holy God we love.

<sup>13</sup> There is another important principle that helps us to select appropriate clothing. That is our concern for the conscience of others—whether fel-

low worshippers or not. (**Read 1 Corinthians 10:32, 33.**) We should take seriously our responsibility to avoid clothes that may offend others. "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up," wrote Paul. Then he added this reason: "For even the Christ did not please himself." (Rom. 15:2, 3) Yes, Jesus put helping others ahead of personal convenience—helping them was key to his doing God's will. Hence, we will forgo items or styles of clothing that we like but that could close the minds of people to whom we want to witness.

<sup>14</sup> Christian parents have a responsibility to teach their families to apply Bible principles. This includes making sure that they and their children strive to make God's heart rejoice by their modest style of dress and grooming. (Prov. 22:6; 27:11) Parents can instill in their children a healthy respect for the holy God whom they worship by setting the right example for their children and by giving loving and practical instruction. How good it is when parents teach their youngsters where and how to find suitable clothes! This means not just what they like but also what will enable them to carry out their privilege of representing Jehovah God.

### USE YOUR FREE WILL WISELY

<sup>15</sup> God's Word provides practical guidance that can help us to make wise choices that will bring glory to God. Still, what we wear involves some personal preference. Our individual tastes vary, as do our financial resources. But

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11, 12. What is a reasonable consideration as we think about what to wear?

13. Why should the counsel found at 1 Corinthians 10:32, 33 influence our choice of clothing?

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14. How can parents train their children to glorify God by their manner of dress?

15. What should guide our personal choice as to our dress?



our clothes should always be neat, clean, modest, appropriate to the occasion, and acceptable locally.

<sup>16</sup> We must admit that it is not always easy to make a decision that shows good judgment, that is sensible, and that takes all factors into account. Many stores cater to popular fashions, so it may take more time and effort to find modest skirts, dresses, and blouses or suits and slacks that are not too tight. Yet, fellow believers will likely note and appreciate the results of our sincere efforts to find attractive and appropriate clothing. And the satisfaction we have of bringing glory to our loving heavenly Father more than makes up for any inconveniences that we may face to dress so as to glorify him.

<sup>17</sup> What about the propriety of brothers wearing a beard? The Mosaic Law required men to wear a beard. However, Christians are not under the Mosaic Law, nor are they obliged to observe it. (Lev. 19:27; 21:5; Gal. 3:24, 25) In some cultures, a neatly trimmed beard may be acceptable and respectable, and it may not detract at all from the Kingdom message. In fact, some appointed brothers have beards. Even so, some brothers might decide not to wear a beard. (1 Cor. 8:9, 13; 10:32) In other cultures or localities, beards are not the custom and are not considered acceptable for Christian ministers. In fact, having one may hinder a brother from bringing glory to God by his dress and grooming and his being irreprehensible. —Rom. 15:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:2, 7.

16. Why is it worth making the effort to be appropriately dressed?

17. What are some factors that may affect whether a brother wears a beard?

<sup>18</sup> How grateful we are that Jehovah does not burden us with detailed lists of regulations about our dress and grooming. Instead, he has permitted us to exercise our free will and make sensible personal decisions, which should be guided by sound Scriptural principles. Thus, even in our dress and grooming, we can show that we want to ‘walk in modesty with our God.’—Mic. 6:8.

<sup>19</sup> Our modesty includes making a humble evaluation of ourselves when compared with Jehovah’s purity and holiness, for we are completely dependent on him for the best guidance. Also, modesty includes showing respect for the feelings and opinions of others. Therefore, we ‘walk in modesty with God’ by conforming our lives to his elevated standards and showing respect for other people’s sensitivities.

<sup>20</sup> Our choice of clothing should not make people conclude anything other than that we are worshippers of Jehovah. Our brothers and sisters as well as people in general should be able to see that we fittingly represent our righteous God. He has high standards, and we happily strive to reflect those standards. Commendation is in order for brothers and sisters whose appearance and fine conduct attract honesthearted people to the Bible’s lifesaving message and bring glory and joy to Jehovah. Making wise decisions about what to wear will surely continue to bring glory to the One who clothes himself “with majesty and splendor.”—Ps. 104:1, 2.

18, 19. How does Micah 6:8 help us as we strive to let our style of dress be pleasing to God?

20. What effect should our dress and grooming have on others?



# Benefit From Jehovah's Guidance Today

## A WISE CHOICE IN POLAND

"I WAS 15 years old when I got baptized, and six months later I began sharing in the auxiliary pioneer service. After one year, I applied for regular pioneer service. When I graduated from secondary school, I asked to serve where the need for Kingdom preachers was greater. I wanted to move away from my hometown and from my grandmother with whom I had been living but who was not one of Jehovah's Witnesses. How sad I was when the circuit overseer said that my territory assignment would be right there in the town where I was born! I tried not to let him know how I

felt. With my head down, I walked away to think about what he had said. I told my service partner: 'I think I'm behaving like Jonah. But in the end Jonah did go to Nineveh. Thus, I too will serve where I am assigned.'

"I have now been a pioneer in my town for four years, and I can see how wise it was to follow the direction given. My negative attitude had been the main problem. I now experience much joy. In one month, I managed to conduct 24 Bible studies. Thanks to Jehovah, I even started a Bible study with my formerly opposed grandmother."

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## A HAPPY OUTCOME IN FIJI

A Bible student in Fiji had to choose between attending a Christian convention and going with her husband to a relative's birthday party. Her husband agreed that she could attend the convention. She told him that she could join him at the gathering afterward. When she returned home from the convention, however, she felt that in her case, it was better to avoid even putting herself in a situation that could be spiritually dangerous, so she did not go.

Meanwhile, when her husband told his relatives that at his request his wife would join them after attending her "Witness

meeting," they replied, "She won't come; Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate birthdays!"\*

As it turned out, her husband was very proud that his wife had taken a stand in line with her beliefs and her conscience. Her faithful course later gave her an opportunity to witness to him, as well as to others. The result? The husband accepted a Bible study and began attending meetings with his wife.

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\* See "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of December 15, 2001.



## Young Ones, Strengthen Your Faith

*“Faith is . . . the evident demonstration of realities that are not seen.”—HEB. 11:1.*

“YOU seem to be too clever to believe in God,” said a fellow student to a young sister in Britain. A brother in Germany wrote: “My teachers view the Bible account of creation as a myth. And they take it for granted that the students believe in evolution.” A young sister in France said: “Teachers in my school are quite astonished that there are students who still believe in the Bible.”

<sup>2</sup> As a young servant of Jehovah or as someone learning about Him, do you feel under pressure to conform to popular beliefs, such as evolution, rather than believe in a Creator? If so, there are steps you can take to strengthen your faith and keep it strong. One step is for you to use your God-given thinking ability, which “will keep watch over you.” It will protect you from secular philosophies that could destroy your faith.—**Read Proverbs 2:10-12.**

<sup>3</sup> Genuine faith is based on accurate knowledge about God. (1 Tim. 2:4) So as you study God’s Word and our

1, 2. What pressure may young ones today feel, and what steps can they take to deal with this?

3. What will we discuss in this article?

SONGS: 41, 69

### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What are some tools that you can use to strengthen your faith?

Why is reading the entire Bible an excellent goal?

What outlook will help you when you discuss God and creation with others?

Christian publications, do not just skim over the material. Use your thinking ability so that you ‘get the sense’ of what you read. (Matt. 13:23) Let us see how doing so can help you to strengthen your faith in God as the Creator and in the Bible—topics on which there is no shortage of “convincing evidence.” —Heb. 11:1, ftn.

### HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH

<sup>4</sup> Have people said to you that they believe in evolution because it is based on science whereas belief in God is based on faith? Many hold this view. But it is good for us to keep this in mind: No matter what someone believes about God or about evolution, some type of faith is involved. How so? None of us have seen God or observed something being created. (John 1:18) And no human—whether he is a scientist or not—has observed one kind of life evolve into another kind. No one has watched a reptile evolve into

4. Why do beliefs about God and the origin of life always involve some type of faith, and what sound approach should we take?

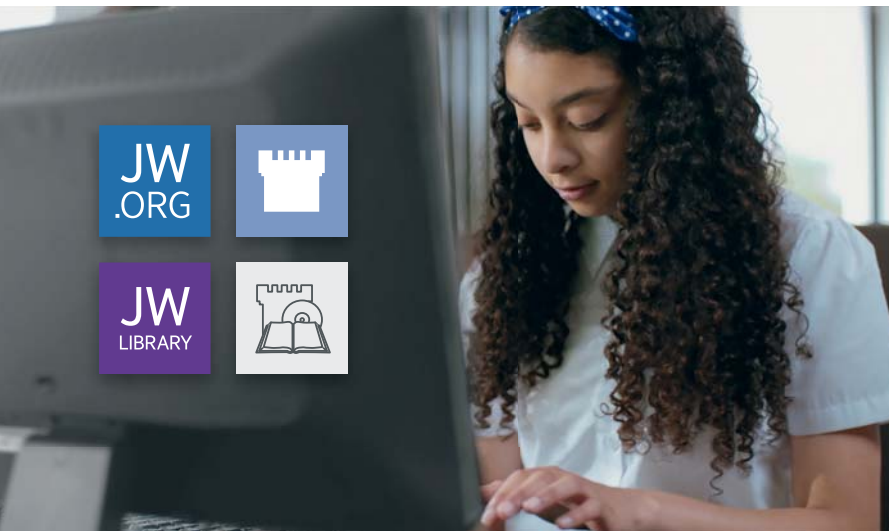
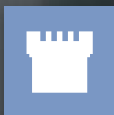
a mammal, for example. (Job 38:1, 4) Hence, all of us must examine the evidence and use our thinking ability to reach sound conclusions. Regarding creation, the apostle Paul wrote: “[God’s] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world’s creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable.”—Rom. 1:20.

<sup>5</sup> “To perceive” means to recognize something that may not be immediately visible or obvious. (Heb. 11:3) Perceptive people, therefore, use their mind, not just their eyes and ears. Jehovah’s organization has supplied many well-researched aids to help us. These can enable us ‘to see’ our Creator through our eyes of faith. (Heb. 11:27) These aids include the video *The Wonders of Creation Reveal God’s Glory*, the brochures *Was Life Created?* and *The Origin of Life—Five Questions Worth Asking*, and the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About*

5. How have we as God’s people been equipped to use our perceptive powers?

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As you reason with others,  
make good use of the tools  
available in your language  
(See paragraph 5)





You? We also receive excellent food for thought in our magazines. *Awake!* has often presented interviews with scientists and others who have explained why they now believe in God. The series of articles called “Was It Designed?” has highlighted examples of the amazing design that we see in nature. Scientists often strive to imitate those wonderful designs.

<sup>6</sup> About the two brochures just mentioned, a 19-year-old brother in the United States said: “These have been invaluable to me. I’ve studied those brochures about a dozen times.” A sister in France wrote: “The ‘Was It Designed?’ articles amaze me! They show that the greatest engineers may imitate but will never equal the complex designs in nature.” The parents of a 15-year-old in South Africa said: “The first thing that our daughter usually reads in *Awake!* is the ‘Interview’ article.” What about you? Do you take full advantage of these provisions? They can help your faith to become like a tree with deep roots. In that way your faith will enable you to withstand what might be like the winds of false teachings.—Jer. 17:5-8.

### YOUR FAITH IN THE BIBLE

<sup>7</sup> Is it wrong to ask sincere questions about the Bible? By no means! Jehovah wants you to use “your power of reason” to prove the truth to yourself. He does not want you to believe just because others do. So use your thinking ability to gain accurate knowledge. That knowledge can then become the firm founda-

6. What are some benefits from using the tools that are available, and how have you benefited?

7. Why does God want you to use your power of reason?

tion for genuine faith. (**Read Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Timothy 2:4.**) One way to gain such knowledge is through the study projects that you choose to pursue.

<sup>8</sup> Some have chosen study projects that involved studying Bible prophecy or the Bible’s historical, archaeological, and scientific accuracy. One fascinating prophecy to consider is Genesis 3:15. That verse introduces the Bible’s primary theme, which is the vindication of God’s sovereignty and the sanctification of his name by means of the Kingdom. That one verse, using figurative language, sets out how Jehovah will solve all the suffering that humans have experienced since Eden. How might you study Genesis 3:15? One way would be to prepare a time line. It could list key scriptures that show how God bit by bit shed light on the individuals and arrangement referred to in this verse and that prove that the prophecy will be fulfilled. As you see the scriptures form a harmonious unit, you will surely conclude that the Bible prophets and writers must have been “moved by holy spirit.” —2 Pet. 1:21.

<sup>9</sup> A brother in Germany wrote: “The Kingdom theme runs through the Bible like a golden thread. That is so, even though about 40 men wrote the Bible. And many of them lived at different times and did not know one another personally.” An Australian sister was moved by a *Watchtower* study article in the issue of December 15, 2013, that dealt with the meaning of the Passover. That special observance is closely connected to Genesis 3:15 and the coming of the

8, 9. (a) What sort of study projects might some enjoy? (b) How have some benefited from meditating on what they study?

Messiah. “That study opened my eyes to how wonderful Jehovah is,” she wrote. “For someone to have thought of this arrangement for the Israelites and for it to be fulfilled in Jesus really impressed me. I literally had to stop and contemplate how incredible that prophetic Passover meal was!” Why did this sister feel that way? She *thought deeply* about what she read and got “the sense of it.” This helped to strengthen her faith and drew her closer to Jehovah.—Matt. 13:23.

<sup>10</sup> Another faith-strengthening aspect to consider is the courage and honesty of the men who wrote the Bible. Many ancient writers flattered their leaders and glorified their kingdoms. Jehovah’s prophets, however, always spoke the truth. They were willing to point out the shortcomings of their own people, even their kings. (2 Chron. 16:9, 10; 24:18-22) And they made plain their own failings and those of other servants of God. (2 Sam. 12:1-14; Mark 14:50) “Honesty like that is rare,” said a young brother in Britain. “This adds to our confidence that the Bible truly is from Jehovah.”

<sup>11</sup> Because of its guiding principles, many are convinced that the Bible was inspired by God. **(Read Psalm 19:7-11.)** A young sister in Japan wrote: “When my family applied Bible teachings, we were truly happy. We experienced peace, unity, and love.” Bible principles protect us from sharing in false worship and from superstitions that enslave many people. (Ps. 115:3-8) Do philosophies that say that there is no God affect peo-

ple? Such teachings as evolution tend to make nature into a sort of god, giving it powers that belong only to Jehovah. Those who say that there is no God claim that our future is entirely in our own hands. They, however, offer no sure hope for a better future.—Ps. 146:3, 4.

### REASONING WITH OTHERS

<sup>12</sup> How can you be effective when you reason with others about creation and the Bible? First, do not be quick to assume you know what others believe. Some people say that they believe in evolution, but they also feel that God exists. They think that God used evolution to create different forms of life. Others say that they believe in evolution because they feel that it would not be taught at school were it not a fact. And some stop believing in God because they are disappointed with religion. So when you discuss the origin of life with someone, it is usually wise to ask questions first. Find out what that person believes. If you are reasonable and willing to listen, he may be inclined to listen to you.—Titus 3:2.

<sup>13</sup> If someone seems to be attacking your belief in creation, you may tactfully shift the responsibility to him. You might ask him to explain how life could have begun without a Creator. For the first life-form to continue, it had to be able to reproduce, to make copies of itself. One professor of chemistry said that among the things needed would be (1) a protective membrane, (2) the ability to get and process energy, (3) information in the genes, and (4) the abil-

10. How does the honesty of Bible writers strengthen our faith in their writings?

11. How can young ones grow in appreciation for the value of Bible principles?

12, 13. What is an effective way to discuss creation or the Bible with fellow students, teachers, or others?

ity to make copies of that information. He added: “One is struck by the complexity of even the simplest form of life.”

<sup>14</sup> If you feel unprepared to discuss evolution or creation, you can try using the basic reasoning that Paul used. He wrote: “Every house is constructed by someone, but the one who constructed all things is God.” (Heb. 3:4) Such logic is very reasonable and effective! Yes, complex designs are the product of an intelligent mind. You might also use a suitable publication. One sister used the two brochures mentioned earlier with a young man who said that he did not believe that there is a God and that he accepted evolution. A week or so later, the young man acknowledged, “Now I believe in God.” This led to a Bible study, and this young man became one of our brothers.

<sup>15</sup> You can use the same basic principles when you talk with someone who has doubts about the Bible. Find out what he actually believes and what topics may interest him. (Prov. 18:13) If he is interested in scientific things, he might respond when you mention points that show the Bible’s scientific accuracy. Other people might be moved by examples showing that the Bible contains accurate prophecies and accurate history. Or you might point out the Bible’s guiding principles, such as those found in the Sermon on the Mount.

<sup>16</sup> Remember, your goal should be to win hearts, not arguments. So be a good listener. Ask sincere questions, and express yourself with mildness and re-

spect, especially when you talk with older ones. They will likely be more inclined to respect your views. They will also see that you have given much thought to your basic beliefs. That is something many young people have not done. Of course, it is good to bear in mind that you are not obligated to answer those who are not reasonable or who just want to make fun of what you believe. —Prov. 26:4.

### MAKE THE TRUTH YOUR OWN

<sup>17</sup> Strong faith rests on more than just basic knowledge of the Bible. So dig deeply into God’s Word, as if you were looking for hidden treasures. (Prov. 2:3-6) Make good use of other tools that may be available in your language, such as *Watchtower Library* on DVD, *Watchtower ONLINE LIBRARY*, as well as *Watch Tower Publications Index* or the *Research Guide for Jehovah’s Witnesses*. Also, make it your goal to read the entire Bible. You might try to do that over a period of 12 months. Few things build our faith as much as reading God’s Word. Thinking back on his youth, a circuit overseer said: “One thing that helped me to appreciate that the Bible is the Word of God was reading it right through. The Bible stories that I had learned from when I was very young finally made sense to me. This was a turning point in my spiritual growth.”

<sup>18</sup> Parents—you play a major role in the spiritual development of your children. How can you help them to build a strong faith? The next article will address this matter.

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14. What can you do if you feel that you are not equipped to discuss evolution or creation?  
15, 16. How might you adjust the way you discuss the Bible, and with what goal?

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17, 18. (a) What can help you to make the truth your own? (b) What question will we consider in the following article?



## Parents, Help Your Children Build Faith

*“Young men and young women . . . Let them praise the name of Jehovah.”—PS. 148:12, 13.*

**SONGS: 88, 115**

### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why is it so important to know your children well?

How might you use illustrations effectively in teaching?

Why do you need to be faithful, patient, and prayerful?

“WE BELIEVE in Jehovah, but that does not necessarily mean that our children will believe,” said a married couple in France. They commented: “Faith is not something you inherit. Our children acquire it little by little.” An Australian brother wrote: “Helping to build faith in your child’s heart is probably the greatest challenge you will ever face. You need to draw on every available resource. You may feel that you have dealt with a question to your child’s satisfaction. Then you find that he raises the same question again later! The answers that satisfy your child’s curious mind today may not be enough for him tomorrow. You may need to revisit some subjects regularly.”

<sup>2</sup> If you are a parent, do you at times feel unequal to the responsibility of teaching and molding your children to become men and women who have faith? Really, in our own wisdom, none of us are up to the task! (Jer. 10:23) But we can succeed when we look to God for guidance. Consider four things that can assist you in helping your children to build

1, 2. (a) What challenge do parents face, and how can they meet that challenge? (b) What four points will we now examine?



faith: (1) Get to know them well. (2) Put your heart into your teaching. (3) Use good illustrations. (4) Be patient and prayerful.

### KNOW YOUR CHILDREN WELL

<sup>3</sup> Jesus was not afraid to ask his followers what they believed. (Matt. 16:13-15) Imitate his example. It is best, in a relaxed setting, to invite your children to express their feelings. That includes talking about any uncertainties, or doubts, they may have. A 15-year-old brother in Australia wrote: “Dad often talks with me about my faith and helps me to reason. He asks: ‘What does the Bible say?’ ‘Do you believe what it says?’ ‘Why do you believe it?’ He wants me to answer in my own words and not simply repeat his or Mum’s words. As I got older, I had to expand on my answers.”

<sup>4</sup> If a child is unsure about some teaching, try not to react too strongly or to respond as if you were on the defensive. Patiently help him to reason on the matter. “Take your child’s questions seriously,” said one father. “Do not dismiss them as of little importance, and do not avoid a subject simply because it may make you feel uncomfortable.” Actually, it is helpful to view your child’s sincere questions as an indication that he cares and wants to understand. Even at 12 years of age, Jesus asked serious questions. **(Read Luke 2:46.)** “When I said that I wondered if we had the true religion,” recalls a 15-year-old in Denmark, “my parents took it calmly—even though they may have been worried

about me. They answered all my questions, using the Bible.”

<sup>5</sup> Get to know your children well—their thinking, their feelings, their concerns. Never assume that they have faith simply because they attend Christian meetings and share in the field service with you. Include spiritual discussions in your daily activities. Pray with and for your children. Try to be aware of any tests to their faith, and help them to deal with these.

### PUT YOUR HEART INTO YOUR TEACHING

<sup>6</sup> As a teacher, Jesus reached hearts because he loved Jehovah, God’s Word, and people. (Luke 24:32; John 7:46) Similar love will help parents reach the hearts of their children. **(Read Deuteronomy 6:5-8; Luke 6:45.)** So parents, be good students of the Bible and of our study aids. Take an interest in creation and in articles in our publications that discuss this topic. (Matt. 6:26, 28) Your doing so will broaden your knowledge, deepen your appreciation for Jehovah, and better equip you to teach your young ones.—Luke 6:40.

<sup>7</sup> When your heart is filled with Bible truth, you will want to discuss it with your family. Do this not only when preparing for Christian meetings or during family worship but at any time. Moreover, such discussions should not be forced but should be natural and

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3. How can parents imitate Jesus’ example in teaching?

4. Why is it important to take a child’s questions seriously? Give an example.

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5. How can parents show that they do not take their child’s faith for granted?

6. When parents inculcate Bible truth in their own heart, how does this help them as teachers?

7, 8. When a parent’s heart is filled with Bible truth, what will be the result? Illustrate.

spontaneous—a part of your everyday conversation. A couple in the United States reflect on Jehovah when the family enjoy an aspect of nature or certain foods. “We remind our children of the love and forethought that Jehovah put into everything he provided for us,” the parents state. When gardening with their two girls, a couple in South Africa point to aspects such as the marvels of how seeds germinate and then plants grow. “We try to develop in our daughters a great respect for life and its wonderful complexity,” say the parents.

<sup>8</sup> When his son was about ten years old, a father in Australia took advantage of a visit to a museum to help his son to strengthen his faith in God and in creation. “We saw a display of ancient sea creatures called ammonoids and trilobites,” says the father. “It struck us that these extinct animals were beautiful, complex, and complete—no less so than what we can see today. So if life evolved from simple to more complex forms, why were these ancient creatures already so complex? It was a lesson that deeply impressed me and that I shared with my son.”

### USE EFFECTIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

<sup>9</sup> Jesus often used illustrations, which stimulate thinking, appeal to the heart, and aid the memory. (Matt. 13:34, 35) Children tend to have a vivid imagination. So parents, try to use illustrations liberally in your teaching. A mother in Japan did just that. When her two boys were eight and ten respectively, she taught them about earth’s atmosphere and the care Jehovah showed in making

9. Why are illustrations effective, and how did one mother demonstrate this?

it. To do that, she gave the boys milk, sugar, and coffee. Then she asked each of the boys to make her a cup of coffee. “They took great care,” she explained. “When I asked them why they were so careful, they said that they wanted the coffee to be just the way I like it. I explained that God mixed the gases in the atmosphere with similar care—just right for us.” That illustration was fitting for their age, and it engaged them in a way that passive learning might not have. No doubt they long remembered the lesson!

<sup>10</sup> You might even use a recipe to help your child build faith in God. How? After you bake a cake or a batch of cookies, explain the role of the recipe. Then hand your child a piece of fruit, perhaps an apple, and ask: “Did you know that this apple started off with a ‘recipe’?” Then cut the apple in two, and give him a seed. You could discuss that the recipe was “written” in the seed but

10, 11. (a) What illustration could you use to help your child build faith in God? (See opening picture.) (b) What illustrations have you found to be effective?

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You can use common objects to build faith in God and in creation  
(See paragraph 10)



in a language far more complex than the words in a recipe book. You might ask: “If the recipe for the cake had a writer, who wrote the much more complex recipe for the apple?” For an older child, you could explain that the recipe for the apple—in fact, for the entire tree on which it grew—was part of the code in the DNA. Together, you might even look at some of the illustrations on pages 10 to 20 of our brochure *The Origin of Life—Five Questions Worth Asking*.

<sup>11</sup> Many parents enjoy discussing articles in the *Awake!* series “Was It Designed?” with their children. Or they use this feature as a basis for teaching simple ideas to very young children. For instance, a couple in Denmark compared airplanes to birds. “Airplanes look just like birds,” they said. “But can airplanes lay eggs and hatch small airplanes? Do birds need special landing strips? And how would you compare the sound of an airplane to the singing of a bird? So who is more intelligent—the maker of airplanes or the Creator of birds?” Such comments, along with good questions, can help a child to develop “thinking ability” and to build faith in God.—Prov. 2:10-12.

<sup>12</sup> Effective illustrations can also strengthen a child’s faith in the accuracy of the Bible. For example, consider **Job 26:7. (Read.)** How might you show that this scripture was inspired? You could just state facts. Instead, why not stimulate your child’s imagination? Bring up the fact that Job lived long before telescopes and spaceships. Your child’s job could be to show how dif-

ficult it might be for some to believe that a very large object, such as the earth, could sit on nothing. The child could use a ball or a stone to illustrate the point by showing that objects with mass have to rest on something. Such a lesson would impress on your child that Jehovah had facts recorded in the Bible long before humans could prove them.—Neh. 9:6.

### ILLUSTRATE THE VALUE OF BIBLE PRINCIPLES

<sup>13</sup> It is particularly important that you impress on your children the value of Bible principles. **(Read Psalm 1:1-3.)** There are many ways to do this. For example, you could ask your children to imagine that they are going to live on a remote island and will have to choose a number of people to live there with them. Then ask, “What qualities must each person have if all in the group are to live in peace and get along well?” You could also talk with them about the wise directions found at Galatians 5:19-23.

<sup>14</sup> That exercise could teach two important lessons. First, God’s standards promote genuine peace and harmony. Second, by educating us now, Jehovah is preparing us for life in the new world. (Isa. 54:13; John 17:3) You could drive these points home by selecting an experience from our publications. It might be from the series “The Bible Changes Lives,” published in *The Watchtower*. Or if someone in your congregation has made major changes in order to please Jehovah, you could invite him to join you and share his story. Such

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12. How can illustrations help children to build faith in the Bible?

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13, 14. How might parents impress on their children the value of Bible principles?

examples bring Bible principles to life! —Heb. 4:12.

<sup>15</sup> The point is this: When teaching your children, do not get into a rut. Try to use your imagination. Stimulate their thinking, keeping their age in mind. Make learning exciting, faith strengthening. “Never tire of experimenting with new ways to approach old subjects,” said one father.

### BE FAITHFUL, PATIENT, PRAYERFUL

<sup>16</sup> God’s spirit is needed to produce strong faith. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Like literal fruit, faith takes time to grow. Thus you will need to manifest patience and perseverance in teaching your children. “My wife and I simply gave our children a lot of attention,” said a father of two in Japan. “From the time they were very young, I studied with them for 15 minutes every day, except on days when we had Christian meetings. Fifteen minutes was not too hard for us or for them.” A circuit overseer wrote: “As a teenager, I had many more questions or doubts than I ever put into words. Over time, many of these were addressed at meetings or during family or personal study. That’s why it’s important for parents just to keep teaching.”

<sup>17</sup> Something that is very important, of course, is *your* example of faith. Your

15. What should you have as a primary goal when teaching your children?

16. When teaching children, why is patience vital? Illustrate.

17. Why is good parental example important, and how has one couple set such an example for their girls?



If you are going to be an effective teacher, God’s Word must first be in *your* heart  
(See paragraph 17)

children will observe what you do, and it certainly will affect them for the good. So as parents, keep building your own faith. Let your children see how real Jehovah is to you. When a couple in Bermuda have anxious moments, they pray with their children that Jehovah guide them, and they encourage their children to pray on their own. “We also tell our older daughter, ‘Have complete trust in Jehovah, keep busy in Kingdom service, and do not worry too much.’ When she sees the outcome, she knows that Jehovah is helping us. This has done wonders for her faith in God and in the Bible.”

<sup>18</sup> In the end, of course, children have to develop their own faith. As parents, you can plant and water. Only God can make it grow. (1 Cor. 3:6) So pray for his spirit, and work hard to teach your precious children, for by doing so, you give Jehovah much to bless.—Eph. 6:4.

18. What important fact must parents recognize?

