

OCTOBER 15, 2012

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY EDITION



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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLE 1 PAGES 7-11

We live in a time of great adversities. This article will help us to learn from ancient and modern examples of those who have faced dire circumstances. It will also show us how we can be courageous and positive no matter what comes our way.

STUDY ARTICLE 2 PAGES 12-16

Today's world is filled with a spirit that tears down rather than builds up. In this article, learn how to avoid attitudes and actions that are damaging to the congregation and how to cultivate the spirit that promotes good relations with others.

STUDY ARTICLES 3, 4 PAGES 22-31

The first article highlights precious promises that God has sworn to fulfill. To benefit from his promises, we must obey him and be true to our word. The second article highlights examples of humans who have let their Yes mean Yes and encourages baptized Christians to be true to their most important Yes.

—Matt. 5:37.

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17 FRIENDS FOR 60 YEARS AND ONLY GETTING STARTED

32 ENCOURAGEMENT “OUT OF THE MOUTH OF CHILDREN”



COVER: Using mobile literature displays, a pioneer couple witness in a high-traffic area of the city

**TIMES SQUARE,
MANHATTAN,
NEW YORK CITY**

600

PIONEERS WORK IN

12

**LOCATIONS IN
MANHATTAN**

55

**TOTAL
CONGREGATIONS
IN MANHATTAN**

THEY OFFERED
THEMSELVES
WILLINGLY



in Brazil

 SOME years ago, **Rúbia** (1), a sister now 30 years old, made a trip to visit **Sandra** (2), a pioneer who served in a small congregation in southern Brazil. During the visit, something happened that impressed Rúbia so deeply that it changed the course of her life. What was it? Let us find out from Rúbia herself.

“I COULDN’T BELIEVE MY EARS”

“Sandra took me along to visit a woman with whom she was studying the Bible. During the study, the woman casually said: ‘Sandra, three girls at my workplace want to study the Bible, but I told them that they’ll have to wait for their turn. I know you’re booked up this year.’ I couldn’t believe my ears. People who wanted to get to



Noemi and **João Paulo**, Ascurra, Santa Catarina





know Jehovah had to be put on a waiting list! In my home congregation, I had a hard time finding even one study. At that very moment, in the home of that Bible student, I felt a deep desire to help the people in her small town. Soon thereafter I left the big city where I lived and moved to the town where Sandra was pioneering.”

How did things turn out for Rúbia? She relates: “Within two months after moving there, I was conducting 15 Bible studies and—believe it or not—before long, like Sandra, I had a waiting list too!”

MOTIVATED TO REEXAMINE HIS MINISTRY

Diego (3), a brother now in his early 20’s, visited a couple of pioneers serving in Prudentópolis, a small town in southern Brazil. The visit left a deep impression on him; in fact, he was moved to reexamine his own ministry. He explains: “I was coasting along in my congregation, spending a few hours each month in the ministry. But when I visited those pioneers and listened to the experiences they related, I couldn’t help but compare their joyful disposition with my own nonchalant attitude toward the ministry. When I saw how happy and excited they were, I wished that my life could be as meaningful as theirs.” After that visit, Diego began pioneering.

Like Diego, are you a young Witness who shares in the preaching work and attends Christian meetings but at the same time feels that the ministry has become a bit routine, lacking excitement? If so, can you make changes in your life that will allow you to taste the joy that comes from serving where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers? Understandably, the idea of giving up a comfortable lifestyle may seem daunting to you. Still, many young ones have chosen to do just that. They have dared to adjust their personal goals and desires so as to serve Jehovah to a fuller extent. As another example, consider Bruno.

MAESTRO OR MINISTER?

Some years ago, **Bruno** (4), now 28 years of age, studied at a famous music school, and his goal was

to become an orchestra conductor. In fact, he progressed so well in his studies that on several occasions he was invited to conduct a symphony orchestra. He was headed for a promising career. "Still," relates Bruno, "I felt that something was missing in my life. I had dedicated myself to Jehovah, but I knew that I wasn't giving my all to him, and that bothered me. I told Jehovah in prayer about my feelings, and I also spoke to experienced brothers in the congregation. After serious consideration, I decided to put my ministry before my music, left the music school, and took up the challenge of serving in an area where there was a real need for Kingdom preachers." How did his decision work out?

Bruno moved to the town of Guapiara (population about 7,000), some 160 miles (260 km) from the city of São Paulo. It was a big change. He relates: "I moved into a small house without a fridge, TV, or Internet connection. Still, the house came with some things I'd never had before—a vegetable garden and an orchard!" While serving there in a small congregation, once a week Bruno packed his bag with food, water, and literature and set off on his motorcycle to preach in the rurals. Many people in that area had never before heard the good news. "I conducted as many as 18 Bible studies," he relates. "Seeing how these students made changes in their life gave me so much joy!" He adds: "At this point, I realized that I had found what had been missing in my life—the feeling of deep satisfaction that comes from putting Kingdom interests first. I would never have enjoyed this had I pursued materialistic goals." And how did Bruno support himself financially in Guapiara? With a smile he says: "By giving guitar lessons." He was still a maestro—of sorts.

"I SIMPLY HAD TO STAY"

Mariana (5), now in her late 20's, found herself in a situation similar to Bruno's. She worked as a lawyer, but despite her lucrative profession, she did not feel truly satisfied. She says: "I felt as if I was 'striving after wind.'" (Eccl. 1:17) Several brothers and sisters encouraged her to think about pioneering.



"We Have Lacked Nothing"

When **João Paulo** and his wife, **Noemi**, expressed their desire to serve where there was a greater need, they received a few discouraging comments. Some in the congregation would say: "You take an economic risk by moving to a small town." "Why move? There's still a lot to do in our own congregation." Says João Paulo: "It was hard not to let such well-intended but disheartening advice dampen our spirit." However, today, after serving for years in an area where there is a greater need for publishers, João Paulo and Noemi are happy they stuck to their decision to expand their ministry. Explains João Paulo: "As long as my wife and I have been here, we have lacked nothing. And when it comes to the things that really matter, we have much more than we had before." Adds Noemi: "It was worth the effort."

Making a living in small towns is a challenge. How do those who have moved to remote regions manage to support themselves financially? By being creative. Some teach English or another language, tutor children in their school studies, do some sewing or house painting or whatever else they can do in the way of part-time jobs. And what is the consensus of those who serve where the need is greater? The blessings more than compensate for the challenges!



The Challenge of Homesickness

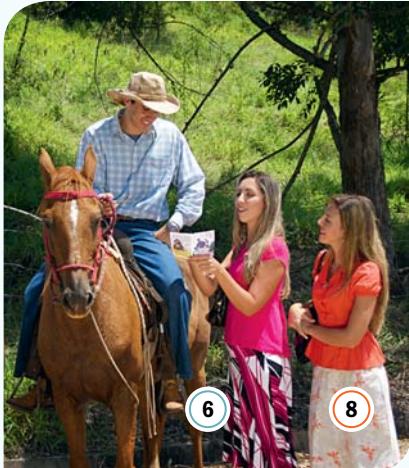
Tiago: “Soon after I arrived in the new congregation, I began to feel downhearted. There were very few publishers in town and hardly any leisure activities. I became homesick. I knew that I had to do something to cheer myself up. So I began to make an effort to get better acquainted with the brothers and sisters in the congregation—and it worked! I made new friends, and before long I felt very happy and much at home.”

After giving it some thought, Mariana, together with her friends **Bianca** (6), **Caroline** (7), and **Juliana** (8), decided to assist a congregation in Barra do Bugres, a remote town near Bolivia, thousands of miles away from their home. What happened next?

Mariana says: “My intention was to stay there for three months. But at the end of that period, I was conducting 15 Bible studies! Of course, those students needed much more help to progress in the truth. Therefore, I just couldn’t muster up the courage to tell them that I was leaving. I simply had to stay.” And that is exactly what all four sisters did. So did Mariana’s new career result in a more purposeful way of life? She says: “That Jehovah uses me to help people change their lives for the better gives me a good feeling. It’s a blessing for me to know that I’m now using my time

and energy doing something that’s really worthwhile.” Caroline sums up the feelings of all four sisters: “When I lie down at night, I have a feeling of deep satisfaction because I have expended myself in pursuing Kingdom interests. My life centers on how to help my Bible students. It’s marvelous to see them making progress. I am experiencing the truthfulness of the words: ‘Taste and see that Jehovah is good.’”—Ps. 34:8.

How happy Jehovah must be to observe an ever-growing number of young brothers and sisters all around the world who “offer themselves willingly” to preach the good news of his Kingdom in remote areas! (Ps. 110:3; Prov. 27:11) All such willing workers, in turn, experience Jehovah’s rich blessing.—Prov. 10:22.





MEETING TODAY'S ADVERSITIES WITH COURAGE

"God is for us a refuge and strength, a help that is readily to be found during distresses."—PS. 46:1.

CAN YOU ANSWER?

How can we avoid being overwhelmed by distressing events?

What reasons do we have for displaying courage?

What provisions has Jehovah made to help us face adversities?

WE LIVE in a time of adversities. The earth has been inundated with disasters. Earthquakes, tsunamis, fires, floods, volcanoes, tornadoes, typhoons, and hurricanes have wreaked havoc on humankind. In addition, family problems and personal dilemmas have brought fear and sorrow. It is so true that "time and unforeseen occurrence" befall us all.—Eccl. 9:11.

² God's servants as a whole have coped well with such distressing circumstances. Even so, we would like to be ready to deal with any difficulties that may confront us in the future as this system nears its end. How can we cope with these challenges and not be overwhelmed? What will help us meet today's adversities with courage?

LEARN FROM THOSE WHO FACED LIFE WITH COURAGE

³ Although difficult circumstances affect more people than ever before, distressing problems are not new to mankind. Let us see what we can learn from some of God's servants who in the past successfully faced life with courage.—Rom. 15:4.

⁴ Consider David. Among other things, he had to put up with the wrath of a king, enemy attacks, the abduction of his wives, treachery in his own ranks, and emotional distress. (1 Sam. 18:8, 9; 30:1-5; 2 Sam. 17:1-3; 24:15, 17; Ps. 38:4-8) The Bible accounts of David's life clearly reveal the pain these adversities caused him. However, they did not

- 1, 2. What adversities have many experienced, but what is the desire of God's servants?
3. As shown at Romans 15:4, how might we be comforted when facing depressing circumstances?
4. What adversities did David endure, and what helped him?

destroy him spiritually. Full of faith, he said: "Jehovah is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be in dread?"—Ps. 27:1; *read Psalm 27:5, 10.*

5 Abraham and Sarah spent most of their life living in tents as aliens in strange lands. Life was not always easy for them. Yet, they resolutely coped with things like a famine and dangers from surrounding nations. (Gen. 12:10; 14:14-16) How were they able to do this? God's Word tells us that Abraham "was awaiting the city having real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God." (Heb. 11:8-10) Abraham and Sarah stayed focused on the things ahead, not getting dragged down by the world around them.

6 Job experienced extreme pressures. Imagine how he felt when everything in his life seemed to go wrong. (Job 3:3, 11) Making matters worse, he did not fully understand why all those things happened to him. Still, he never gave up. He maintained his integrity and his faith in God. (*Read Job 27:5.*) What a fine example for us to imitate!

7 Consider, too, the apostle Paul's example. He experienced 'dangers in the city, in the wilderness, and at sea.' He speaks of 'hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness.' Paul also mentions spending 'a night and a day in the deep,' likely because of one of the shipwrecks that he went through. (2 Cor. 11:23-27) Despite all of that, note the attitude he expressed after he had faced death for serving God: "This was that we might have our trust, not in ourselves, but in

5. What helped Abraham and Sarah to cope with a hard life?

6. How can we imitate Job?

7. What did Paul experience as he served God, but what realization gave him the courage to continue?

the God who raises up the dead. From such a great thing as death he did rescue us and will rescue us." (2 Cor. 1:8-10) Not many people have had as many bad experiences as Paul did. Nevertheless, many of us can relate to his feelings and can take comfort from his courageous example.

AVOID BEING OVERWHELMED BY NEGATIVE EVENTS

8 In today's world so full of disasters, challenges, and pressures, many feel overwhelmed. Even some Christians have felt that way. Lani,* who was enjoying the full-time service with her husband in Australia, says that when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, it was devastating and struck like a bolt of lightning. She says, "The treatments made me very ill, and I was left with no self-esteem." On top of everything else, she had to care for her husband, who had undergone spinal surgery. If we find ourselves in such a situation, what can we do?

9 We do well to remember that Satan wants to use the tribulations we suffer to undermine our faith. However, we must not allow him to sap our joy in this way. Proverbs 24:10 says: "Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty." Meditating on Biblical examples, such as those discussed earlier, will help us to muster up courage in the face of adversities.

10 It is also good to keep in mind that

* Some names have been changed.

8. How might today's problems affect us? Illustrate.

9, 10. (a) What must we not allow Satan to do? (b) How can we cope with the reality mentioned at Acts 14:22?

we cannot remove all problems. In fact, we can expect to experience them. (2 Tim. 3:12) Acts 14:22 tells us: "We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations." Rather than becoming dejected, why not view them as opportunities to manifest courage based on your faith in God's ability to help you?

11 We need to focus on positive things. God's Word tells us: "A joyful heart has a good effect on the countenance, but because of the pain of the heart there is a stricken spirit." (Prov. 15: 13) Medical researchers have long recognized the curative value of positive thinking. Many patients given sugar pills (placebos) have experienced relief of symptoms simply because they thought they were getting help. The opposite, called the nocebo effect, has also been demonstrated. Patients' health deteriorated simply because they were told that a drug would have negative effects. Constantly dwelling on situations we cannot change may only tear us down. On the positive side, Jehovah does not give us "sugar pills." Rather, even in times of disaster, he gives real help through the encouragement found in his Word, our supportive brotherhood, and the strength provided by holy spirit. Focusing on these things will lift us up. Instead of dwelling on negative events, do what is practical to cope with each problem and focus on the positive aspects of your life.—Prov. 17:22.

12 In recent times, some countries

11. How can we avoid being overwhelmed by life's adversities?

12, 13. (a) What has helped God's servants to endure the effects of disasters? Illustrate. (b) During times of disaster, how does it become evident what is most important in one's life?

have suffered severe disasters. Notably, many brothers in these lands have shown remarkable resilience. This does not mean that it was easy. In early 2010, a massive earthquake and tsunami in Chile destroyed many of our brothers' homes and possessions, and in some cases, their livelihood. Despite this, the brothers just kept on going spiritually. Samuel, whose home was completely destroyed, said: "Even during these extreme circumstances, my wife and I never stopped attending meetings and preaching. I believe that these habits helped us not to become desperate." Along with many others, they put the disaster behind them and moved on in Jehovah's service.

13 In September 2009, over 80 percent of Manila, Philippines, was flooded by torrential rains. A wealthy man who lost much said, "The flood was a great equalizer, bringing difficulties and sufferings to both the rich and the poor." This reminds us of Jesus' prudent advice: "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Matt. 6:20) Building one's life around material things, which can so quickly disappear, often brings disappointment. How much wiser it is to center our life on our relationship with Jehovah, which can remain intact no matter what happens around us!

—Read Hebrews 13:5, 6.

REASONS FOR DISPLAYING COURAGE

14 Jesus acknowledged that there would be problems during the time

14. What reasons do we have for displaying courage?



When you face adversity,
take advantage of the
help Jehovah has provided

of his presence, but he said: "Do not be terrified." (Luke 21:9) With him as our King and with the Creator of the universe backing us up, we have every reason for confidence. Paul encouraged Timothy by saying: "God gave us not a spirit of cowardice, but that of power and of love and of soundness of mind." —2 Tim. 1:7.

15 Note some expressions of the strong conviction of God's servants. David said: "Jehovah is my strength and my shield. In him my heart has trusted, and I have been helped, so that my heart exults." (Ps. 28:7) Paul expressed his unwavering confidence, saying: "In all these things we are coming off completely victorious through him that loved us." (Rom. 8:37) Likewise, as danger loomed, Jesus left no doubt in his listeners' minds that he had a strong relationship with God, saying: "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." (John 16:32) What is evident in these expressions? Each reveals unwavering trust in Jehovah. Our developing similar confidence in God can give us the courage to face any of today's adversities.—*Read Psalm 46:1-3.*

15. Give examples of the conviction of God's servants, and explain how we can have similar courage.

BENEFIT FROM PROVISIONS TO MAINTAIN COURAGE

16 Christian courage is not self-reliance. Rather, it is a result of our getting to know God and relying on him. We can do this by studying his written Word, the Bible. A sister suffering from depression explains what helps her, "I read especially comforting passages over and over again." Have we applied the direction to have a regular time for family worship? Doing these things will help us to have the attitude of the psalmist who said: "How I do love your law! All day long it is my concern."—Ps. 119:97.

17 We also have Bible-based publications containing information that strengthens our confidence in Jehovah. Many brothers have found life stories in our magazines particularly helpful. One sister in Asia who suffers from bipolar mood disorder was delighted when she read the life story of a former missionary brother who successfully dealt with the same disorder. She wrote, "It helped me to understand my own problem and gave me hope."

16. Why is the study of God's Word important for us?

17. (a) What provision may help us maintain a courageous outlook? (b) Give an example of how a published life story has helped you.



18 Prayer can help in all kinds of situations. The apostle Paul drew attention to the value of this provision, saying: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6, 7) Do we take full advantage of this avenue of help to gain strength in the midst of adversities? Alex, a brother in Britain who has long suffered from depression, said: "Talking to Jehovah in prayer and listening to him by reading his Word has been a lifeline for me."

19 Association at meetings is another vital provision to help us. A psalmist wrote: "My soul has yearned and also pined away for the courtyards of Jehovah." (Ps. 84:2) Do we feel the same? Lani, mentioned earlier, explains her view of Christian association: "Attending meetings was not optional. I knew that I had to be there if I expected Jehovah to help me cope."

18. Why should we utilize the provision of prayer?

19. What should be our view of attending Christian meetings?

20 We also get courage by keeping active in the Kingdom-preaching work. (1 Tim. 4:16) A sister in Australia who has experienced a multitude of problems says: "Preaching was the last thing I wanted to do, but an elder invited me to go with him. I went. Jehovah must have been helping; each time I shared in the ministry, I felt so happy." (Prov. 16: 20) Many have found that by helping others to build faith in Jehovah, they strengthen their own faith. In so doing, they keep their mind off their own problems and keep focused on the more important things.—Phil. 1:10, 11.

21 Jehovah has provided abundant help to meet today's adversities with courage. By taking advantage of all these provisions and by meditating on and imitating fine examples of courageous servants of God, we have the assurance that we can face difficulties successfully. Although many negative things may yet happen as this system nears its end, we can feel as did Paul, who said: "We are thrown down, but not destroyed. . . . We do not give up." (2 Cor. 4:9, 16) With Jehovah's help, we can meet today's adversities with courage.—*Read 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18.*

20. How will sharing in the preaching work help us?

21. What assurance do we have regarding the difficulties we face?



"The undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the spirit you people show."—PHILEM. 25.

CAN YOU ANSWER?

Why do we want to give attention to the spirit we show?

What attitudes do we want to avoid, and how can we do so?

What can we do to display an upbuilding spirit in the congregation?

WHAT KIND OF SPIRIT DO YOU SHOW?

WHEN writing to fellow believers, the apostle Paul repeatedly expressed his hope that God and Christ would approve of the spirit that the congregations displayed. For example, to the Galatians he wrote: "The undeserved kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ be with the spirit you show, brothers. Amen." (Gal. 6:18) What did he mean by "the spirit you show"?

² Paul's use of the word "spirit" in this context refers to the impelling force that causes us to say or do things in a certain way. One person may be gentle, considerate, mild-tempered, generous, or forgiving. The Bible speaks well of "the quiet and mild spirit" and of being "cool of spirit." (1 Pet. 3:4; Prov. 17:27) On the other hand, another person may be sarcastic, materialistic, easily offended, or may have an independent attitude. Worse yet, there are those who show an unclean, disobedient, or even rebellious spirit.

³ Thus, when Paul used expressions such as "the Lord be with the spirit you show," he was encouraging his brothers to show a spirit in harmony with God's will and the Christlike personality. (2 Tim. 4:22; *read Colossians 3:9-12*.) Today, we do well to ask ourselves: 'What kind of spirit do I show? How can I more fully manifest a spirit that pleases God? Can I improve in contributing to the overall positive spirit of the congregation?' To illustrate, in a field of sunflowers, each flower contributes its glowing face to the overall beauty of the flower patch. Are

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1. What hope did Paul express when writing to fellow believers?
 - 2, 3. (a) When using the word "spirit," to what was Paul at times referring? (b) What questions might we ask ourselves about the spirit we show?

we one of the “flowers” that adds to the overall beauty of the congregation? Certainly, we should strive to be one. Let us now see what we can do to manifest a spirit that pleases God.

AVOID THE WORLD'S SPIRIT

4 The Scriptures tell us: “We received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God.” (1 Cor. 2:12) What is “the spirit of the world”? It is the same spirit as that mentioned at Ephesians 2:2, which says: “You at one time walked according to the system of things of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience.” This “air” is the world’s spirit, or mental attitude, and it surrounds us like literal air. It is everywhere. It is often manifested in the no-one-is-going-to-tell-me-what-to-do or the fight-for-your-rights attitude of so many people today. They constitute “the sons of disobedience” of Satan’s world.

5 Such attitudes are not new. In Moses’ time, Korah rose up against those in authority in the congregation of Israel. He particularly targeted Aaron and his sons, who had the privilege of serving as priests. Perhaps he saw their imperfections. Or he may have argued that Moses practiced nepotism—giving privileges to his relatives. Whatever the case, it is obvious that Korah began to look at things from a human viewpoint and spoke out against those appointed by Jehovah, disrespectfully telling them: “That is enough of you . . . Why, then, should you lift yourselves up above the congregation?” (Num. 16:3) Similarly, Dathan and Abiram had complaints

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4. What is “the spirit of the world”?
 5. What bad spirit did some in Israel show?

against Moses, telling him that he was ‘trying to play the prince over them to the limit.’ When called to appear before Moses, they responded arrogantly: “We are not going to come up!” (Num. 16:12-14) Jehovah was clearly not pleased with their spirit. He executed all the rebels.—Num. 16:28-35.

6 Some in the first century also became critical of those entrusted with authority in the congregation, “disregarding lordship.” (Jude 8) These men likely were dissatisfied with their privileges and tried to influence others against appointed men who were conscientiously carrying out God-given duties.—*Read 3 John 9, 10.*

7 Obviously, such a spirit has no place in the Christian congregation. That is why there is a need for caution in this regard. Older men in the congregation are not perfect, just as they were not perfect in Moses’ day and in the apostle John’s time. Elders may make mistakes that affect us personally. If that happens, how inappropriate it would be for any member of the congregation to react according to the world’s spirit, vehemently demanding “justice” or that “something be done about this brother”! Jehovah may choose to overlook certain minor failings. Can we not do the same? Because of what they perceive as defects in the elders, some individuals who engage in serious wrongdoing in the congregation have refused to appear before a committee of elders assigned to help them. This could be likened to a patient who loses out on the benefits

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6. How did some in the first century reveal that they had a bad attitude, and what might have been the reason for it?
 7. In what way might there be a need for caution in the congregation today?



How does meditating on Jesus' role affect the way you respond to counsel?

of a treatment because he does not like something about the doctor.

8 To avoid that kind of spirit, we can remember that Jesus is pictured in the Bible as having "in his right hand seven stars." The "stars" represent the anointed overseers and, by extension, all the overseers in the congregations. Jesus can direct the "stars" in his hand in any way he feels appropriate. (Rev. 1:16, 20) Thus, as Head of the Christian congregation, Jesus has full control of the bodies of elders. If someone on a body truly needs correction, the One who has "eyes as a fiery flame" will see to it that this is done in His own time and way.

8. What scriptures can help us to maintain a proper view of those taking the lead in the congregation?

(Rev. 1:14) In the meantime, we maintain proper respect for those appointed by holy spirit, for Paul wrote: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you."—Heb. 13:17.

9 A Christian's spirit may also be tested if he is corrected or is relieved of privileges in the congregation. One young brother was tactfully counseled by the elders about playing violent video games. Sadly, he did not receive

9. (a) What test may a Christian experience if he is corrected or disciplined? **(b)** What is the best way to react to reproof?

the counsel well and had to be deleted as a ministerial servant because he no longer met the Scriptural qualifications. (Ps. 11:5; 1 Tim. 3:8-10) Afterward, the brother made it widely known that he did not agree, repeatedly writing letters critical of the elders to the branch office and even influencing others in the congregation to do the same. It is really counterproductive, though, for us to jeopardize the peace of the entire congregation in an attempt to justify our actions. How much better to view reproof as a way to open our eyes to see weaknesses that we were not aware of and then quietly accept the correction.

—*Read Lamentations 3:28, 29.*

¹⁰ James 3:16-18 is a good guide as to what constitutes both the improper and the proper spirit to display in the congregation. It says: “Where jealousy and contentiousness are, there disorder and every vile thing are. But the wisdom from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, not making partial distinctions, not hypocritical. Moreover, the fruit of righteousness has its seed sown under peaceful conditions for those who are making peace.” As we work in harmony with “the wisdom from above,” our godly qualities will enable us to contribute to a good spirit among the brothers.

MANIFEST A RESPECTFUL SPIRIT IN THE CONGREGATION

¹¹ We should keep in mind that Jehovah has assigned the elders “to shep-

^{10.} (a) Explain what we can learn from James 3:16-18 about a good spirit and a bad spirit. (b) What results from displaying “the wisdom from above”?

^{11.} (a) What will maintaining a proper spirit help us to avoid? (b) What do we learn from David’s example?

herd the congregation of God.” (Acts 20: 28; 1 Pet. 5:2) Thus, we realize that the wise course is to respect God’s arrangement, whether we have the privilege of serving as elders or not. Maintaining a proper spirit can help us to avoid being oversensitive about position. When King Saul of Israel felt that David had become a threat to his kingship, Saul “was continually looking suspiciously at David.” (1 Sam. 18:9) The king developed a bad spirit and even wanted to kill David. Rather than being overly concerned with position as Saul was, how much better to be like David. In spite of all the injustice heaped upon him, the young man maintained respect for God-appointed authority.—*Read 1 Samuel 26:23.*

¹² Differences of viewpoint can become a source of irritation in the congregation—even among the overseers. The Bible’s counsel can help us in this regard: “In showing honor to one another take the lead” and, “Do not become discreet in your own eyes.” (Rom. 12:10, 16) Instead of insisting that we are right, we should acknowledge that there is often more than one acceptable way to look at a situation. If we try to see others’ point of view, we can contribute to the unity of the congregation.—Phil. 4:5.

¹³ Does this mean that it is wrong to offer our observation if we see something in the congregation that we feel needs adjustment? No. In the first century, an issue arose over which there was much disputing. The brothers “arranged for Paul and Barnabas and some others of them to go up to the apostles

^{12.} What will contribute to unity in the congregation?

^{13.} How should we view our own opinions, and what Bible example illustrates this?

and older men in Jerusalem regarding this dispute." (Acts 15:2) No doubt each of those brothers had an opinion on the subject and an idea of how the matter might be handled. However, once each one expressed his thought and a spirit-directed decision was made, the brothers did not continue to bring up their individual opinions. After the letter with the decision reached the congregations, "they rejoiced over the encouragement" and were "made firm in the faith." (Acts 15:31; 16:4, 5) Likewise today, once we bring a matter to the attention of the responsible brothers, we should be content to leave it to their prayerful consideration.

SHOW A FINE SPIRIT IN PERSONAL RELATIONS

14 On a personal level, there are many opportunities for us to show a fine spirit. Each of us can do much good if we display a forgiving spirit when others offend us. God's Word tells us: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also." (Col. 3:13) The expression "if anyone has a cause for complaint" suggests that there may be valid reasons for becoming irritated with others. However, rather than being overly concerned about their foibles and disturbing the peace of the congregation, we try to imitate Jehovah and forgive freely, moving on in our service together.

15 Regarding forgiveness, we can learn from the man Job. His three would-be

14. How can we show a fine spirit on a personal level?

15. (a) What can we learn about forgiveness from Job? (b) How can prayer help us to show a pleasing spirit?

comforters offended him with many unkind words. Nevertheless, Job was forgiving. How? "He prayed in behalf of his companions." (Job 16:2; 42:10) Praying for others may change our attitude toward them. Praying for all our Christian associates helps us to develop a Christ-like spirit. (John 13:34, 35) In addition to praying for our brothers, we should pray for holy spirit. (Luke 11:13) God's spirit will help us display true Christian qualities in dealing with others.—*Read Galatians 5:22, 23.*

CONTRIBUTE TO A WHOLESOME SPIRIT IN GOD'S ORGANIZATION

16 What delightful results can be obtained if each member of the congregation makes it his or her goal to contribute to the wholesome spirit of the congregation! After considering these matters, we may decide that we personally can improve in displaying an upbuilding spirit. If so, we should not hesitate to let ourselves be examined in the light of God's Word. (Heb. 4:12) Paul, who was very concerned about his actions in the congregations, said: "I am not conscious of anything against myself. Yet by this I am not proved righteous, but he that examines me is Jehovah."—1 Cor. 4:4.

17 As we strive to act in harmony with the wisdom from above, not taking ourselves or our position too seriously, we will contribute to a wholesome spirit in the congregation. By having a forgiving spirit and thinking positively of others, we will enjoy peaceful relations with fellow worshippers. (Phil. 4:8) As we do these things, we can be confident that Jehovah and Jesus will be pleased 'with the spirit we show.'—Philem. 25.

16, 17. Regarding 'the spirit we show,' what are you personally determined to do?

Friends for 60 Years and Only Getting Started

On a summer evening in 1951, four young men, all in their early 20's, stood in adjoining phone booths in Ithaca, New York, U.S.A., and excitedly placed long-distance calls to Michigan, Iowa, and California. There was good news to share!

Left to right: Richard, Lowell, Ramon, and Bill became friends at Gilead



THE preceding February, 122 pioneers converged on South Lansing, New York, to attend the 17th class of Gilead School. Among the prospective missionaries were Lowell Turner, William (Bill) Kasten, Richard Kelsey, and Ramon Templeton. Lowell and Bill, both from Michigan, Richard from Iowa, and Ramon from California soon became well-acquainted.

Some five months later, excitement was running high when it was announced that Brother Nathan Knorr from world headquarters was coming to speak to the students. The four brothers had indicated their desire to serve together in the same country—if possible. Were they now to learn more about their foreign missionary assignments? Yes, indeed!

Anticipation grew as Brother Knorr, speaking to the entire class, began to announce their foreign assignments. The first ones called to the platform were those four nervous, but relieved, young men who at last knew that they could stay together! But where? Their surprised classmates

erupted in sustained applause when it was announced that they were to be sent to Germany.

Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere had marveled at the record of faithfulness shown by the Witnesses in Germany from 1933 onward under the Hitler regime. Many students recalled having prepared clothing shipments and CARE packages for their European brothers after World War II. God's people in Germany were examples of outstanding faith, determination, courage, and trust in Jehovah. 'Now we will actually get to know these dear brothers and sisters personally,' Lowell remembers thinking. No wonder everyone was so excited and telephone calls needed to be made that evening!

ON THEIR WAY TO GERMANY

On July 27, 1951, the SS *Homeland* pulled away from its dock on New York's East River, and the four friends were on an 11-day voyage to Germany. Brother Albert Schroeder, one of their Gilead instructors and later a member of the Governing



Joys in their assignment fully convinced them that Jehovah always knows best

Above: Ramon conducting a Kingdom Ministry School class; **right:** Richard working on the Addressograph at Bethel in Wiesbaden

Body, had taught them their first sentences in German. Now, with several German passengers on board, perhaps they could learn more. But the passengers apparently spoke different dialects of German. How confusing!

On Tuesday morning, August 7, after having endured bouts of seasickness, the brothers finally set foot on German soil in Hamburg. Everywhere they saw the scars left by the war that had ended just six years earlier. Saddened by what they saw, they embarked on an overnight train trip to Wiesbaden, where the branch office was then located.

Early Wednesday morning, they met their very first Witness in Germany—and with a typical German name at that! Hans drove them from the train station to Bethel, where he turned them over to a rather resolute elderly sister who spoke

no English. She evidently thought, however, that language barriers could be overcome simply by speaking louder. But despite her steadily increasing volume, both she and the four brothers became ever more frustrated. Finally Brother Erich Frost, the branch servant, appeared and greeted them warmly in English. Things were improving.

Toward the end of August, the four attended their first German convention, the "Clean Worship" Assembly in Frankfurt am Main. The peak attendance of 47,432 and the fact that 2,373 were baptized renewed the brothers' missionary zeal and desire to preach. But a few days later, Brother Knorr revealed that they were to stay at Bethel and be assigned to work there.

Because his heart was set on missionary work, Ramon had once turned down a chance to go to Bethel in the United States. Neither Richard nor Bill had given any thought to Bethel service. But their subsequent joys in their assignment fully convinced them that Jehovah always knows best. How wise then to rely on his leading rather than

on one's personal desires! He who has learned this lesson will be happy serving Jehovah *anywhere* and *in whatever assignment* he is given.

VERBOTEN!

Many in the Germany Bethel family were happy to have Americans in their midst with whom they could now practice speaking English. But one day in the dining room, these hopes were abruptly shattered. Brother Frost, in his typically enthusiastic manner, began speaking in German about something apparently quite serious. Most in the family kept very quiet, their eyes glued to their plates. The new arrivals, although unable to understand what was being said, slowly began to realize that it had something to do with them. So when Brother Frost thundered out, "VERBOTEN!" ("Forbidden!") repeating it with extra volume for emphasis, they were uneasy. What had they done to set off such strong emotions?

The meal ended, and all scurried to their rooms. Later, a brother explained: "In order for you to help us, you must be able to speak German. That is why Brother Frost said that until you have learned the language, speaking English with you is VERBOTEN."

The Bethel family was quick to obey. Not only did this help the newcomers to learn German but it also taught them that counsel given by a loving brother, even if initially hard to apply, is often for our own good. Brother Frost's counsel reflected his interest in the welfare of Jehovah's organization and his love for his brothers.* No wonder the four grew to love him!

LEARNING FROM OUR FRIENDS

From God-fearing friends we can learn valuable lessons, which in turn help us to become better friends of Jehovah. From faithful German brothers and sisters—too numerous to mention by name—the four learned much, but they also learned from one another. Richard explains: "Lowell had some knowledge of German and did well with it, but the rest of us were floundering. Since he was also the oldest in our group, he automatically became the one we turned to in matters of language and in taking the lead." Ramon recalls: "How thrilled I was when a Swiss brother offered us the use of his chalet in Switzerland for our first vacation after a year in Germany!"

* Brother Frost's exciting life story was published in *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1961, pages 244-249.



Above: Brother Frost (right) and others during a visit with Brother Knorr (left);
right: On vacation in Switzerland in 1952





Left to right: Richard, Bill, Lowell, and Ramon meeting in Selters for the dedication of the new branch buildings in 1984

Two weeks to ourselves with no struggling with German! But I had not taken Lowell into consideration. He insisted that we read and discuss the daily text every morning—in German! Much to my chagrin, he did not waver. But we learned a valuable lesson. Follow the lead of those who have your best interests at heart, even when you sometimes disagree. This attitude has stood us in good stead over the years and has made it easier for us to submit to theocratic direction.”

The four friends also learned to appreciate one another’s strong points, even as Philippians 2:3 says: “With lowliness of mind [consider] that the others are superior to you.” So the others often dignified Bill by delegating to him tasks that the three all agreed he could handle better than they could. “When critical or unpleasant steps needed to be taken to clear up challenging matters,” Lowell recalls, “we turned to Bill. He had the knack of dealing with unpleasant situations the way we all agreed we should but somehow lacked the courage or ability to do.”

HAPPY MARRIAGES

One by one, each of the four decided to marry. Their friendship was based on mutual love for Jehovah and the full-time ministry, so they were set on finding mates willing to give Jehovah top priority. Full-time service had taught them that giving is more rewarding than receiving and that

personal desires must rightfully be given lower priority than Kingdom interests. They thus chose sisters who of their own initiative had already taken up full-time service. Four strong and happy marriages resulted.

For a friendship or a marriage to be truly lasting, Jehovah must be in the relationship. (Eccl. 4:12) Even though Bill and Ramon later suffered the loss of their mates in death, both had experienced the joy and support that a faithful wife can give. Lowell and Richard continue to enjoy this support, and Bill, who remarried, made a wise choice in a mate so that he could remain in full-time service.

In later years, their assignments led them to different places—chiefly in Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Canada, and the United States. As a result, the four friends were unable to spend as much time together as they would have liked. But even though separated by distance, they always kept in touch, rejoicing with one another in their blessings and weeping together in their sorrows. (Rom. 12:15) Friends like that are to be treasured and should never be taken for granted. They are precious gifts from Jehovah. (Prov. 17:17) How rare true friends are in today’s world! But every true Christian can have them in abundance. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we enjoy friendship with fellow believers the world over and, above all, with Jehovah God and Jesus Christ.

As is true of us all, the paths of these four friends have at times been rocky—whether because of experiencing the pain of losing a mate, the stress of contending with serious illness, the concerns of caring for aged parents, the difficulties of raising a child while in full-time service, the apprehension felt when accepting new theocratic assignments, and now increasingly the problems of old age. But they also know from experience that friends—both near and far—help lovers of Jehovah to cope successfully with each and every challenge.

A FRIENDSHIP WITH ETERNITY IN VIEW

How fine it was that Lowell, Ramon, Bill, and Richard at the respective ages of 18, 12, 11, and 10 dedicated themselves to Jehovah and that between 17 and 21 years of age, they all took up the full-time service. They did as Ecclesiastes 12:1 encouraged them to do: “Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood.”

If you are a young Christian male, accept if possible Jehovah’s invitation to enter full-time service. Then thanks to his undeserved kindness, you might experience the joys—as have these four friends—of serving in circuit, district, or zone work; of serving at Bethel, including on Branch Committees; of instructing at Kingdom Ministry and Pioneer Service schools; and of speaking at conventions, both large and small. How these four rejoiced in knowing that tens of thousands benefited from their activity! All was made possible simply because as young men, they acted on Jehovah’s loving invitation to serve him whole-souled.—Col. 3:23.

Today, Lowell, Richard, and Ramon are once again serving together at the branch office, now in Selters, Germany. Sad to say, Bill died in 2010

while serving as a special pioneer in the United States. Almost 60 years of a very special four-way friendship shattered by death! But our God, Jehovah, never forgets his friends. We can be sure that under his Kingdom rule, every Christian friendship temporarily broken by death will be restored.

Shortly before he died, Bill wrote: “In all the 60 years of our friendship, I cannot remember any unpleasant moment. Our relationship has always been something very special to me.” To which his three friends, with a continuation of their friendship in the new world clearly in view, quickly add, “And we only got started.”

“In all the 60 years of our friendship, I cannot remember any unpleasant moment”



Left to right: Ramon, Richard, and Lowell



OBEY GOD AND BENEFIT FROM HIS SWORN PROMISES

"Since [God] could not swear by anyone greater, he swore by himself."—HEB. 6:13.

SEE IF YOU CAN ANSWER:

Why can we be sure that God's purposes will not fail?

What promise did God make after Adam and Eve sinned?

How do we benefit from God's sworn promise to Abraham?

JEHOVAH is "the God of truth." (Ps. 31:5) Sinful men cannot always be trusted, whereas "it is impossible for God to lie." (Heb. 6:18; *read Numbers 23:19*.) What he purposed for mankind's benefit always comes true. For example, everything that God said he would do at the beginning of each creative epoch "came to be so." Thus, by the end of the sixth creative day, "God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good."—Gen. 1:6, 7, 30, 31.

² Having reviewed his creative works, Jehovah God announced the beginning of a seventh day—not a 24-hour day, but a long period of time during which he has rested from further works of earthly creation. (Gen. 2:2) God's rest day still has not ended. (Heb. 4:9, 10) The Bible does not reveal exactly when it started. It was some time after the creation of Adam's wife, Eve, about 6,000 years ago. Ahead of us lies the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ, which will ensure the fulfillment of God's purpose in creating the earth to be an everlasting paradise filled with perfect mankind. (Gen. 1:27, 28; Rev. 20:6) Can you be sure that you will have such a happy future? Indeed you can! For "God proceeded to bless the seventh day and make it sacred." This was a guarantee that no matter what unforeseen problems might arise, God's purpose would unfailingly come true by the end of his rest day.—Gen. 2:3.

³ After God's rest day began, however, disaster

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1. How does Jehovah's word differ from that of sinful humans?
 2. What is God's rest day, and why did he "make it sacred"?
 3. (a) After the start of God's rest day, what rebellion took place? (b) How did Jehovah state his intentions to crush the rebellion?

struck. Satan, an angelic son of God, set himself up as a rival god. He told the first lie and deceived Eve so that she disobeyed Jehovah. (1 Tim. 2:14) Eve, in turn, got her husband to join the rebellion. (Gen. 3:1-6) Even at that low point in universal history when God's truthfulness was being called into question, Jehovah did not see the need to confirm with an oath that his purpose would still come true. Instead, in words that would be understood in God's due time, he simply stated how the rebellion would be crushed: "I shall put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He [the promised Seed] will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel."—Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9.

SWORN OATH —A USEFUL LEGAL TOOL

4 At that early stage in human history, it is doubtful that swearing to the truthfulness of a matter was a necessary part of the vocabulary that God gave Adam and Eve. Perfect creatures who love God and imitate him do not need to make an oath; they always tell the truth and have complete trust in one another. But things changed with the introduction of human sin and imperfection. Eventually, when lying and deception were common among men, it became necessary for them to swear to the truthfulness of important matters.

5 Making oaths was a legal tool that the patriarch Abraham used to good advantage on at least three occasions. (Gen. 21:22-24; 24:2-4, 9) This occurred, for example, when he returned from defeating the king of Elam and his allies.

4, 5. What legal tool did Abraham at times make use of?

The kings of Salem and Sodom came out to meet Abraham. Melchizedek, the king of Salem, was also "priest of the Most High God." As such, he blessed Abraham and praised God for giving Abraham the victory over his enemies. (Gen. 14:17-20) Then, when the king of Sodom wanted to reward Abraham for rescuing the king's people from the invading armies, Abraham swore: "I do lift up my hand in an oath to Jehovah the Most High God, Producer of heaven and earth, that, from a thread to a sandal lace, no, I shall take nothing from anything that is yours, in order that you may not say, 'It was I who made Abram rich.'"—Gen. 14:21-23.

JEHOVAH'S SWORN PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

6 For the benefit of sinful mankind, Jehovah God has also made use of oaths by using expressions like "'As I am alive,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah." (Ezek. 17:16) The Bible describes more than 40 different occasions when Jehovah God made sworn oaths. Perhaps the best-known example was in God's dealings with Abraham. Over a period of many years, Jehovah had made several covenant promises to Abraham that when combined show that the promised Seed would descend from Abraham through his son Isaac. (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:5, 18; 21:12) Then Jehovah put Abraham to a severe test, commanding him to offer up his beloved son. Without delay, Abraham obeyed and was about to sacrifice Isaac when an angel of God stopped him. Then God made this oath: "By myself I

6. (a) What example did Abraham set for us?
(b) How do we stand to benefit from Abraham's obedience?

do swear . . . that by reason of the fact that you have done this thing and you have not withheld your son, your only one, I shall surely bless you and I shall surely multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand that are on the seashore; and your seed will take possession of the gate of his enemies. And by means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves due to the fact that you have listened to my voice.”—Gen. 22:1-3, 9-12, 15-18.

7 Why did God swear to Abraham that His promises would come true? It was to reassure those who would become joint heirs with Christ, making up the secondary part of the promised “seed,” and to strengthen their faith. (*Read Hebrews 6:13-18; Gal. 3:29*) As the apostle Paul explained, Jehovah “stepped in with an oath, in order that, through two unchangeable things [his promise and his oath] in which it is impossible for God to lie, we . . . may have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope set before us.”

8 Anointed Christians are not the only ones who benefit from God’s sworn oath to Abraham. By means of Abraham’s “seed,” Jehovah swore that people of “all nations of the earth [would] bless themselves.” (Gen. 22: 18) Such blessed ones include Christ’s obedient “other sheep,” who have set before them the hope of everlasting life on an earthly paradise. (John 10:16) Whether your hope is heavenly or earthly, “lay hold” on it by continuing to live a life of obedience to God.—*Read Hebrews 6:11, 12.*

7, 8. (a) For what purpose did God swear to Abraham? **(b)** How will Jesus’ “other sheep” benefit from God’s sworn promise?



Abraham will soon see
Jehovah's promises come true

RELATED OATHS OF GOD

9 Centuries later, Jehovah again swore with respect to the above-mentioned promises when he sent Moses to speak to Abraham’s descendants, who were then in slavery to the Egyptians. (Ex. 6:6-8) Referring to that occasion, God said: “In the day of my choosing Israel, . . . I lifted up my hand *in an oath* to them to bring them forth from the land of Egypt to a land that I had spied out for them, one flowing with milk and honey.”—Ezek. 20:5, 6.

9. What sworn oath did God make when Abraham’s descendants were in slavery to the Egyptians?

¹⁰ Then, after Israel's deliverance from Egypt, Jehovah made another sworn promise to them: "If you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. And you yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Ex. 19:5, 6) What a privileged position God thus offered Israel! It meant that if obedient, individuals from that nation could have the hope of being used by God as a kingdom of priests for the blessing of the rest of mankind. Later, in describing what he had done for Israel on that occasion, Jehovah stated: "I proceeded . . . to make a *sworn statement* to you and enter into a covenant with you."—Ezek. 16:8.

¹¹ At that time, Jehovah did not oblige Israel to make a sworn oath that they would be obedient; nor did God force the Israelites into this privileged relationship. Instead, they said of their own free will: "All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do." (Ex. 19:8) Three days later, Jehovah God made known to Israel what he would require of his chosen nation. First they heard the Ten Commandments, and then Moses related to them further commands that are recorded from Exodus 20:22 to Exodus 23:33. What was Israel's response? "All the people answered with one voice and said: 'All the words that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do.'" (Ex. 24:3) Then Moses wrote

10. What promise did God make to Israel after delivering them from Egypt?

11. How did Israel respond to God's invitation to come into a covenant relationship with him as his chosen people?

down the laws in "the book of the covenant" and read them aloud so that the whole nation could hear them again. After that, for the third time, the people vowed: "All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do and be obedient."—Ex. 24:4, 7, 8.

¹² Jehovah immediately began to fulfill his side of the Law covenant by arranging for a tent of worship and a priesthood that made it possible for sinful humans to approach him. Israel, on the other hand, quickly forgot their dedication to God and "pained even the Holy One of Israel." (Ps. 78:41) For example, while Moses was busy receiving further instructions on Mount Sinai, the Israelites became impatient and began to lose faith in God, thinking that Moses had deserted them. So they made a golden image of a calf and said to the people: "This is your God, O Israel, who led you up out of the land of Egypt." (Ex. 32:1, 4) Then they held what they called "a festival to Jehovah" and bowed down and sacrificed to their man-made image. Upon seeing that, Jehovah told Moses: "They have turned aside in a hurry from the way I have commanded them to go." (Ex. 32:5, 6, 8) Sadly, from then on Israel had a history of making vows to God that they later broke.—Num. 30:2.

TWO ADDITIONAL OATHS

¹³ During the reign of King David, Jehovah made two more sworn promises for the benefit of all who obey him.

12. What were the responses of Jehovah and of his chosen people to the covenant that had been established between them?

13. What sworn promise did God make to King David, and how does it relate to the promised Seed?

First, he swore to David that his throne would last forever. (Ps. 89:35, 36; 132: 11, 12) This meant that the promised Seed would be called “the Son of David.” (Matt. 1:1; 21:9) Humbly, David addressed this future descendant as his “Lord” because the Christ would occupy a superior position.—Matt. 22:42-44.

14 Second, Jehovah inspired David to foretell that this unique King would also serve as mankind’s High Priest. In Israel the kingship and priesthood were completely separate. The priests were from the tribe of Levi, and the kings were from the tribe of Judah. But concerning his illustrious future heir, David foretold: “The utterance of Jehovah to my Lord is: ‘Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.’ Jehovah has sworn (and he will feel no regret): ‘You are a priest to time indefinite according to the manner of Melchizedek!’” (Ps. 110:1, 4) In fulfillment of that prophecy, Jesus Christ, the promised Seed, now rules from heaven. Also, he serves as mankind’s High Priest by helping repentant ones to come into an acceptable relationship with God.—*Read Hebrews 7: 21, 25, 26.*

THE NEW ISRAEL OF GOD

15 Because of rejecting Jesus Christ, the nation of Israel finally lost their favored status with God along with the prospect of ever becoming “a kingdom of priests.” As Jesus told the Jew-

14. What sworn promise did Jehovah make concerning the promised Seed, and how do we benefit from it?

15, 16. (a) What two Israels are referred to in the Bible, and which one has God’s blessing today? (b) What command did Jesus give his followers about the making of vows?

ish leaders: “The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits.” (Matt. 21: 43) That new nation was born at Pentecost 33 C.E. when God’s spirit was poured out on about 120 disciples of Jesus gathered in Jerusalem. These became known as “the Israel of God” and soon numbered into several thousand made up of people from every nation of the then-known world.—Gal. 6:16.

16 Unlike natural Israel, God’s new spiritual nation has kept on bearing good fruit by its continual obedience

Jehovah’s promises always come true

to God. One of the commands that its members obey concerns the making of sworn oaths. Oath-taking was being abused when Jesus was on earth, with people swearing falsely or swearing about trivial matters. (Matt. 23:16-22) Jesus taught his followers: “Do not swear at all . . . Just let your word Yes mean Yes, your No, No; for what is in excess of these is from the wicked one.”—Matt. 5:34, 37.

17 Does this mean that it is always wrong to make a sworn oath? More important, what is involved in letting our Yes mean Yes? These questions will be considered in the next study article. As we continue to meditate on God’s Word, may we be motivated to keep on obeying Jehovah. Then he, in turn, will delight to bless us forever in accord with his precious sworn promises.

17. What questions will be considered in the next study article?



"Just let your word Yes mean Yes, your No, No."—MATT. 5:37.

SEE IF YOU CAN ANSWER:

What did Jesus say about sworn oaths?

Why was Jesus such a fine example in proving true to his word?

In what areas of life should our Yes mean Yes?

LET YOUR YES MEAN YES

GENERALLY, true Christians do not have to make sworn oaths. This is because they obey Jesus, who said: "Just let your word Yes mean Yes." He meant that a person should keep his word. Jesus prefaced that command by saying: "Do not swear at all." He said this in condemnation of the casual habit that many people have in their daily conversation of repeatedly swearing to this or to that, without ever intending to do what they say. By going "in excess" of a simple Yes or No to state their intentions, such people may reveal that they are really untrustworthy and thus under the influence of "the wicked one."—*Read Matthew 5:33-37.*

2 Do Jesus' words mean that all making of oaths is bad? How could that be? As we learned in the preceding article, Jehovah God and his righteous servant Abraham made sworn oaths on important occasions. Also, God's Law required the taking of a sworn oath to settle certain disputes. (Ex. 22:10, 11; Num. 5:21, 22) Thus, it may be necessary for a Christian to swear to tell the truth when testifying in a court of law. Or, on a rare occasion, a Christian might find it necessary to make a sworn oath to assure others of his intentions or to help settle a matter. In fact, when Jesus himself was put under oath by the high priest, he did not object to it but responded truthfully to the Jewish Sanhedrin. (Matt. 26:63, 64) Jesus, however, did not need to swear to anyone. Even so, to emphasize the reliability of his message, he often introduced what he said in this unique way: "Most truly [literally, "Truly, truly," ftn.]

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1. What did Jesus say about the swearing of oaths, and why?
 2. Explain why it is not always wrong to make sworn oaths.

I say to you." (John 1:51; 13:16, 20, 21, 38) Let us see what else we can learn from the examples of Jesus, Paul, and others whose Yes meant Yes.

JESUS—THE FINEST EXAMPLE

³ "*Look! I am come . . . to do your will, O God.*" (Heb. 10:7) With these meaningful words, Jesus presented himself to God to carry out all that was foretold about the promised Seed, including his being 'bruised in the heel' by Satan. (Gen. 3:15) No other human has ever volunteered to shoulder such a heavy responsibility. From heaven, Jehovah voiced his complete trust in his Son, though not requiring that Jesus swear to be true to his word.—Luke 3:21, 22.

⁴ Jesus always practiced what he preached by letting his Yes mean Yes. He allowed nothing to sidetrack him from the commission he received from his Father to preach the good news of God's Kingdom and to make disciples of all whom God drew to Jesus. (John 6:44) The Bible describes the extent of Jesus' truthfulness in these well-known words: "No matter how many the promises of God are, they have become Yes by means of him." (2 Cor. 1:20) Indeed, Jesus is the finest example of one who proved true to what he promised his Father. Next, consider one who did his best to imitate Jesus.

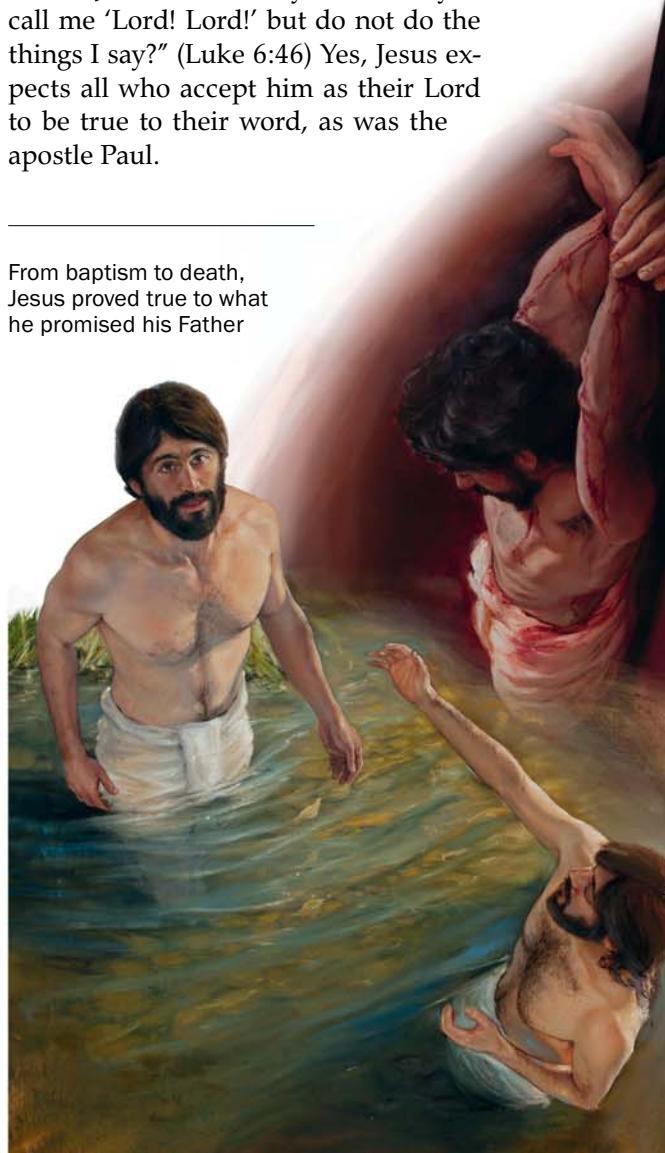
PAUL—A MAN OF HIS WORD

⁵ "*What shall I do, Lord?*" (Acts 22:10) With these sincere words, Paul, then known as Saul, responded to the direc-

3. What did Jesus promise God in prayer, and how did his heavenly Father respond?
4. To what extent did Jesus let his Yes mean Yes?
5. What example did the apostle Paul set for us?

tion of the glorified Lord Jesus, who had appeared to him in a vision to stop him from persecuting Christ's disciples. As a result of this encounter, Saul humbly repented of his past course, got baptized, and accepted the special assignment given to him to bear witness about Jesus to the nations. From that time onward, Paul continued to address Jesus as his "Lord," acting in harmony with that expression until the end of his earthly life. (Acts 22:6-16; 2 Cor. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:8) Paul was not like others of whom Jesus said: "Why, then, do you call me 'Lord! Lord!' but do not do the things I say?" (Luke 6:46) Yes, Jesus expects all who accept him as their Lord to be true to their word, as was the apostle Paul.

From baptism to death,
Jesus proved true to what
he promised his Father



6 Paul zealously spread the Kingdom message throughout Asia Minor and into Europe, establishing and revisiting many congregations. On occasion, he found it necessary to swear to the truthfulness of what he wrote. (Gal. 1: 20) When some in Corinth accused Paul of being untrustworthy, he wrote in his defense: "God can be relied upon that our speech addressed to you is not Yes and yet No." (2 Cor. 1:18) At the time of writing that, Paul had left Ephesus and was traveling through Macedonia on his way to Corinth. Originally, he had planned to revisit Corinth before going into Macedonia. (2 Cor. 1:15, 16) But, as with traveling overseers today, sometimes routings have to be changed. Such changes are not made for trivial, selfish reasons but because of some emergency. In Paul's case, the reason he delayed his planned visit to Corinth was for the congregation's own good. How so?

7 Some time after making his original plans, Paul received disturbing news that disunity and immorality were being tolerated in Corinth. (1 Cor. 1:11; 5:1) To correct the situation, he wrote strong counsel in his first letter to the Corinthians. Then, instead of sailing directly from Ephesus to Corinth, Paul decided to give his brothers time to apply his counsel so that when he eventually arrived, his visit could be more encouraging. Assuring them of the truthfulness of the reason for his change in plans, Paul wrote in his second letter: "I call upon God as a witness against my own soul that it is to spare you that I have not yet come to Corinth." (2 Cor. 1:23) May

6, 7. (a) Why did Paul change his plan to revisit Corinth, and why were his critics not justified in questioning his trustworthiness? (b) How should we view those appointed to take the lead among us?

we never be like Paul's critics; rather, let us show our deep respect for those appointed to take the lead among us. The truth is that we do well to imitate Paul, just as he imitated Christ.—1 Cor. 11:1; Heb. 13:7.

OTHER FINE EXAMPLES

8 "I am willing to go." (Gen. 24:58) With these simple words, Rebekah answered her mother and her brother respecting her willingness to leave home that very day and travel with a stranger over 500 miles (800 km) to become the wife of Abraham's son Isaac. (Gen. 24:50-58) Rebekah's Yes meant Yes, and she proved to be a faithful God-fearing wife to Isaac. For the rest of her life, she dwelled in tents as an alien in the Promised Land. She was rewarded for her faithfulness by becoming one of the ancestresses of the promised Seed, Jesus Christ.—Heb. 11:9, 13.

9 "No, but with you we shall return to your people." (Ruth 1:10) The Moabite widows Ruth and Orpah kept saying this to their widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, who was returning from Moab to Bethlehem. Finally, at Naomi's urging, Orpah returned to her homeland. But Ruth's No meant No. (**Read Ruth 1: 16, 17.**) She loyally stuck to Naomi, abandoning forever her family and the false religion of Moab. She endured as a faithful worshipper of Jehovah and was rewarded by being one of only five women mentioned by Matthew in Christ's genealogy.—Matt. 1:1, 3, 5, 6, 16.

10 "Here I am! Send me." (Isa. 6:8) Before saying this, Isaiah saw a glorious vision of Jehovah sitting on His throne

8. What example did Rebekah set for us?

9. How was Ruth true to her word?

10. Why was Isaiah a good example for us?



Are you being true to your most important Yes?

above Israel's temple. While gazing upon this glorious sight, Isaiah heard Jehovah say: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" This was an invitation to be Jehovah's spokesman to deliver God's message to His wayward people. Isaiah proved true to his word —his Yes meant Yes. For over 46 years, he faithfully served as a prophet, delivering strong messages of denunciation as well as wonderful promises about the restoration of true worship.

11 Why has Jehovah had the above examples recorded for us in his Word? And how serious is the matter of letting our Yes mean Yes? The Bible clearly warns that a person who is "false to agreements" is among those who are "deserving of death." (Rom. 1:31, 32)

11. (a) Why is being true to our word so important? (b) What warning examples are there of some who were not truthful?

Pharaoh of Egypt, Judean King Zedekiah, and Ananias and Sapphira are among the bad examples highlighted in the Bible of individuals whose Yes did not mean Yes. They all fared badly and stand as warning examples for us.—Ex. 9:27, 28, 34, 35; Ezek. 17:13-15, 19, 20; Acts 5:1-10.

12 Living "in the last days," we are surrounded by people who are "disloyal," people "having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power." (2 Tim. 3: 1-5) As much as possible, we must avoid such bad association. Instead, we should regularly gather with those who strive always to let their Yes mean Yes.—Heb. 10:24, 25.

YOUR MOST IMPORTANT YES

13 The most important promise that a person can make concerns his or her dedication to God. On three specific occasions, those who want to disown themselves as disciples of Jesus have the opportunity to say Yes to inquiries about their intentions. (Matt. 16: 24) When two elders interview a person who would like to become an unbaptized publisher, the person is asked, "Do you really want to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" Later, when the individual has made further spiritual progress and wishes to be approved for baptism, the elders will meet with him or her and ask, "Have you made your personal dedication to Jehovah in prayer?" Finally, on the day of baptism, each candidate is asked, "On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?"

- 12.** What will help us to be true to our word?
- 13.** What is the most important Yes spoken by a follower of Jesus Christ?

Thus, in front of witnesses, these new ones say Yes respecting their promise to serve God forever.

14 Whether you are newly baptized or have been serving God for decades, you need to examine yourself periodically and ask questions like these: ‘In imitation of Jesus Christ, am I continuing to be true to my most important Yes? Am I continuing to obey Jesus by making the preaching and disciple-making work the main focus of my life?’—*Read 2 Corinthians 13:5.*

15 Proving true to our dedication vow means that we must also be faithful in other important matters. For example: Are you married? Then continue to honor the precious vow you made to love and cherish your marriage mate. Have you signed a business contract or filled out an application form for theocratic privileges? Then be true to your commitments and to what you have promised. Have you accepted an invitation to a meal by someone of humble means? Then do not cancel it if a seemingly better invitation is made by someone else. Or have you promised someone you met in the house-to-house ministry that you would call again to give that person further spiritual help? Then by all means let your Yes mean Yes, and Jehovah will bless your ministry.—*Read Luke 16:10.*

BENEFITING FROM OUR HIGH PRIEST AND KING

16 The Bible states that as imperfect humans, “we all stumble many times,”

14. What self-examination should we periodically make?

15. In what areas of life is it important to let our Yes mean Yes?

16. If we have failed to keep our word, what should we do?

especially in the use of our tongue. (Jas. 3:2) What should we do upon realizing that we have failed to keep our word? In God’s Law to Israel, there was a merciful provision for someone who was guilty of “speaking thoughtlessly with his lips.” (Lev. 5:4-7, 11) There is also a loving provision for Christians who commit such a sin. If we confess the specific sin to Jehovah, he will mercifully forgive us through the office of our High Priest, Jesus Christ. (1 John 2:1, 2) To remain in God’s favor, however, we must show fruits that befit repentance by not making a practice of such sins and by doing our best to make amends for any harm done by our thoughtless speech. (Prov. 6:2, 3) Of course, it is far better to think carefully before making promises that we are unable to fulfill. —*Read Ecclesiastes 5:2.*

17 What a wonderful future awaits all worshippers of Jehovah who keep striving to let their Yes mean Yes! For the 144,000 anointed ones, it will mean immortal life in heaven, where they will share with Jesus in his Kingdom “and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years.” (Rev. 20:6) For countless millions more, it will mean benefiting from Christ’s Kingdom rule in an earthly paradise. There they will be helped to grow to physical and mental perfection. —Rev. 21:3-5.

18 By proving faithful in the final test at the end of Jesus’ Millennial Reign, we will never again have reason to doubt anyone’s word. (Rev. 20:7-10) Every Yes will mean Yes, and every No, No. For everyone then living will be a perfect imitator of our loving heavenly Father, Jehovah, “the God of truth.”—Ps. 31:5.

17, 18. What glorious future awaits all who strive to let their Yes mean Yes?



The children in Russia (left) who received gifts from the children in Australia (right)

Encouragement “Out of the Mouth of Children”

In December 2009, the Russian Supreme Court upheld a decision that resulted in the liquidation of the local religious organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Taganrog, Russia, confiscation of the Kingdom Hall, and a declaration that 34 of our publications were considered to be extremist. This startling development was posted on the official Web site of Jehovah’s Witnesses along with photos of Witnesses affected by the decision, including young children.

A few months later, the Administrative Center of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia received a box and the following letter from a Witness family in Queensland, Australia, who had seen the report of the Court’s decision: “Dear Brothers, Our children, Cody and Larissa, were very touched by the faith and trials of the friends in Russia. They have written cards and letters, and we have made up a small package of gifts that we would like to send to the children in Taganrog, just to let them know that very far away, there are other children who

also faithfully serve Jehovah and who are thinking of them. They send them all a big hug and their love.”

Upon receiving the gifts, the children in Taganrog wrote illustrated thank-you letters to the family in Australia. Moved by the expressions of encouragement from “out of the mouth of children,” a Witness serving at the Russia branch wrote to Cody and Larissa: “You can imagine how unpleasant it is for both children and adults when they are punished for something that they have not done. Our brothers and sisters in Taganrog have done nothing wrong, but their Kingdom Hall was taken away. This has made them very sad. It will be encouraging for them to know that someone from the other side of the world is thinking of them. Thank you for your warm and generous spirit!” —Ps. 8:2.

We truly are part of a worldwide brotherhood, and our love for one another helps us all to cope with life’s trials and difficulties. While courtrooms debate whether the publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses incite hatred, our children quietly express their concern for one another’s welfare, transcending national and cultural boundaries and demonstrating the truth of Jesus’ words: “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves.”—John 13:35.