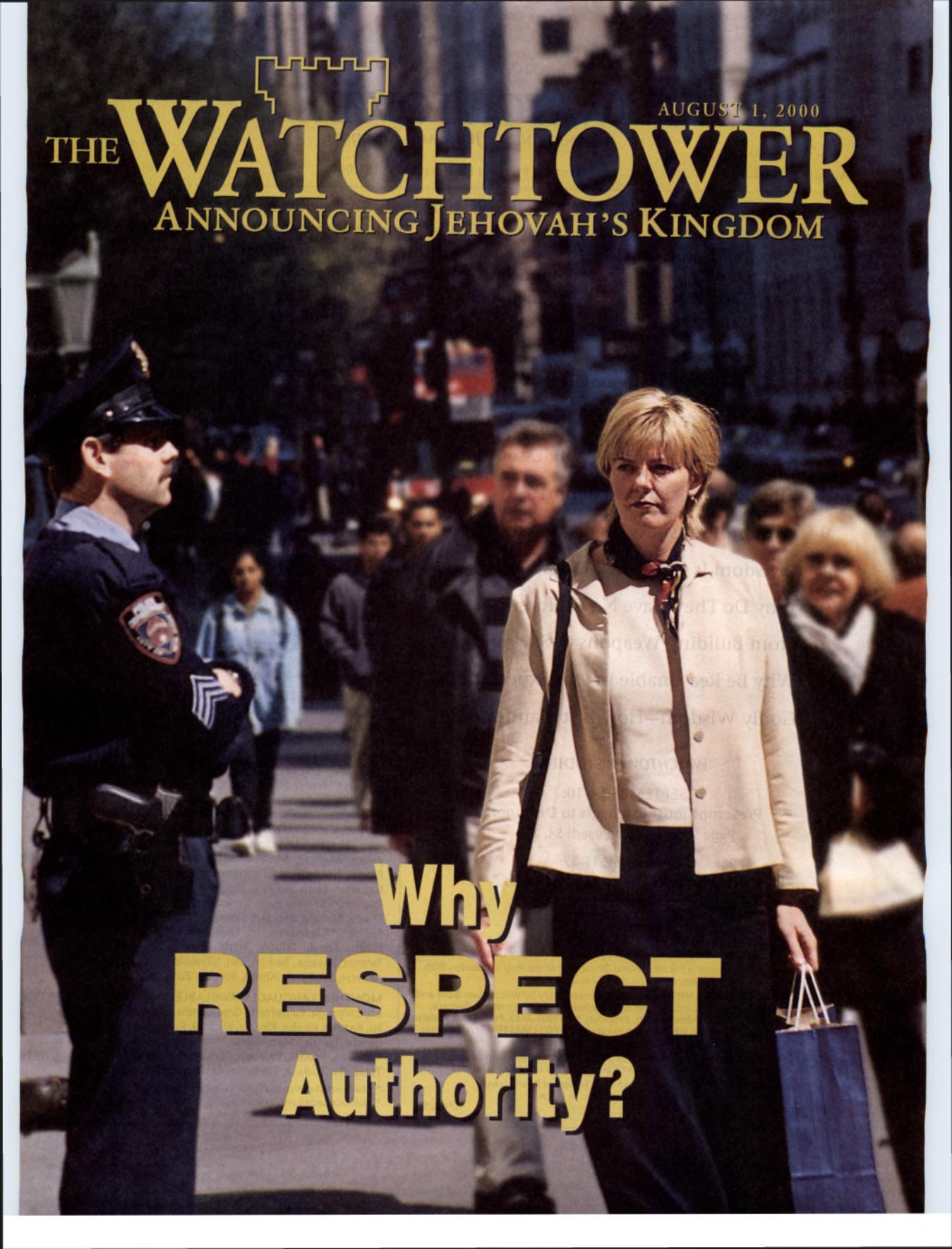


AUGUST 1, 2000

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Why
RESPECT
Authority?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

August 1, 2000

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Respect for Authority—Why Lacking?
- 4 Respect for Authority—Why Essential?
- 8 Kingdom Proclaimers Report
- 9 Presumptuousness Leads to Dishonor
- 14 "Wisdom Is With the Modest Ones"
- 20 Why Do They Have No Children?
- 24 From Building Weapons to Saving Lives
- 29 Why Be Reasonable in Our Expectations?
- 32 Godly Wisdom—How Is It Manifested?

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

SEPTEMBER 4-10:

Presumptuousness Leads to Dishonor.

Page 9. Songs to be used: 54, 213.

SEPTEMBER 11-17:

"Wisdom Is With the Modest Ones."

Page 14. Songs to be used: 138, 73.

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Respect for Authority

WHY LACKING?

"The defiance of established authority, religious and secular, social and political, as a worldwide phenomenon may well one day be accounted the outstanding event of the last decade."

YEARS have passed since the 1960's, the decade here referred to by the historian and philosopher Hannah Arendt. Today, the tide of disrespect for authority is running stronger than ever.

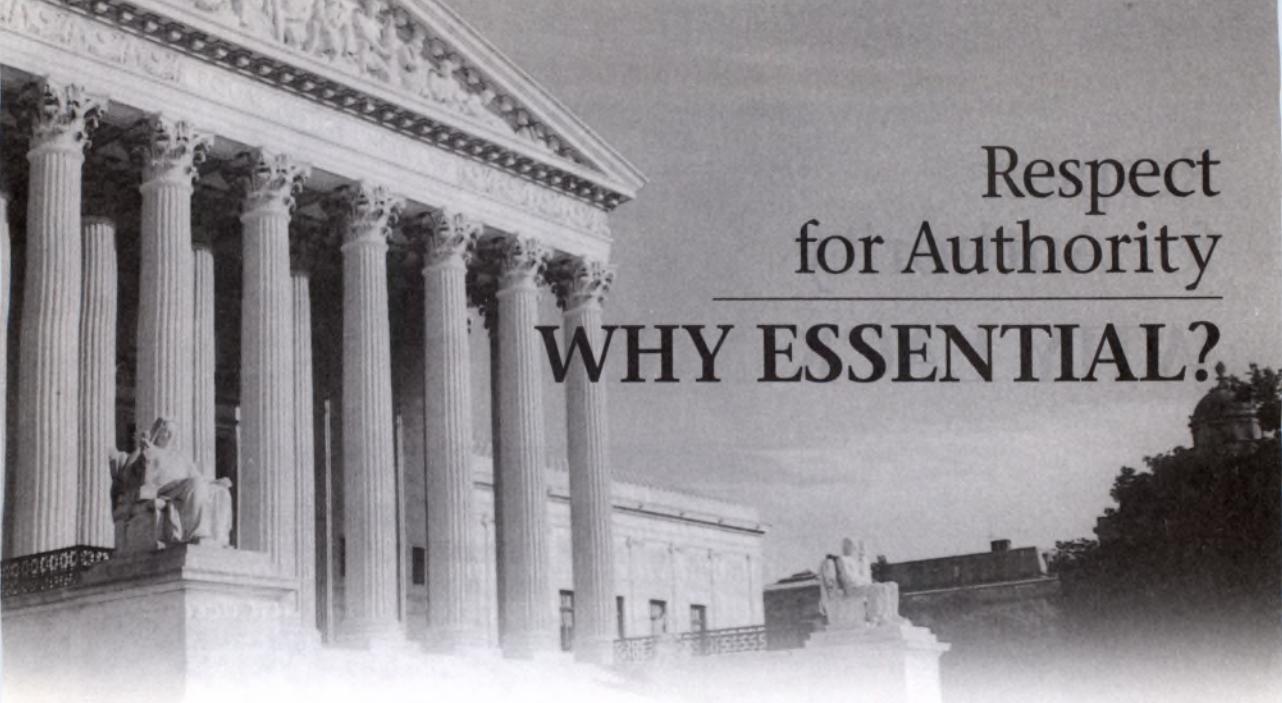
For example, a recent report in *The Times* of London states: "Some parents refuse to accept the authority of the teacher over their child and when attempts are made to discipline their child they complain." Frequently, when their children are disciplined at school, parents turn up there not just to threaten the teachers but to attack them.

A spokesman for the National Association of Head Teachers in Britain is quoted as stating: "The public are saying 'I have got rights,' rather than 'I have got responsibilities.'" Besides failing to instill in their children a healthy respect for authority, some parents do not correct their youngsters—and refuse to let others do so. Children claiming their "rights" are allowed to flout the authority of both parents and teachers, and the result is predictable—"a new generation with no respect for

authority and little idea of right and wrong," writes columnist Margarette Driscoll.

Time magazine in its article "Lost Generation" pinpointed the disillusionment of many Russian youths by quoting a top rapper who said: "How can anyone born into this world, where nothing lasts for long and nothing is fair, have faith in society?" Sociologist Mikhail Topalov endorsed this sentiment: "These kids are not stupid. They've seen their parents lied to by the state, they've seen them lose their savings and their jobs. Can we expect them to respect authority?"

It would be wrong to conclude, however, that distrust of authority characterizes only the younger generation. Today, people of all ages view any kind of authority with distrust, even contempt. Does this mean that no authority can be trusted? If exercised properly, authority, defined as "the power or right to control, judge, or prohibit the actions of others," can be a force for good. It can be of benefit both to individuals and to the community. The following article will consider how this is so.



Respect for Authority

WHY ESSENTIAL?

Photo by Josh Mathes, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States

“...knowing his right to seek such bills without the authorizing of Congress, he may do so.”
WHO is not grateful that the police have the authority to arrest criminals who steal our possessions or threaten our family? And do we not appreciate that courts have the authority to punish criminals in order to protect the community?

Other helpful public services, such as road maintenance, sanitation, and education—usually paid for by taxes levied by governmental authority—may also come to mind. True Christians are foremost in acknowledging that respect for duly appointed authority is essential. But how far does such respect go? And in what areas of life is respect for authority called for?

Authority in the Community

The Bible tells all people, whether believers or unbelievers, to respect civil authority, which works for the good of the community. The Christian apostle Paul wrote to his fellow believers in Rome about this, and it is helpful to consider what he says, as recorded at Romans 13:1-7.

“...knowing his right to seek such bills without the authorizing of Congress, he may do so.”
Paul was a Roman citizen, and Rome was the world power at that time. Paul's letter, written about the year 56 C.E., counseled Christians to be exemplary citizens. He wrote: “Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities, for there is no authority except by God; the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God.”

Paul here explains that there would not be any human authority if God did not permit it. In that sense the superior authorities have a relative position within the framework of God's purpose. It therefore follows that “he who opposes the authority has taken a stand against the arrangement of God.”

While citizens who do good may receive praise from the superior authorities, these authorities are also empowered to administer punishment against wrongdoers. Those who practice what is bad have ample reason to fear the authorities' right to act as “an avenger,” since the governments do so as “God's minister.”

Paul concludes his reasoning by saying: "There is therefore compelling reason for you people to be in subjection, not only on account of that wrath but also on account of your conscience. For that is why you are also paying taxes; for they are God's public servants constantly serving this very purpose."

The responsibility for the disposition of taxes rests with the superior authorities, not with the taxpayer. As an honest citizen, a Christian maintains a good conscience. He knows that by subjecting himself to the superior authorities and paying due taxes, not only is he upholding the standard of the community in which he lives but he is also living in harmony with divine requirements.

The Family and Authority

What about authority in the family? In the early days of its life, a baby will often demand attention by crying or even by screaming. But a wise parent will discern what the baby's real needs are and not let a tantrum dictate. Some children, as they grow older, are given free rein and are allowed to set their own standards. Lacking experience, they may become involved in crime or other wrongdoing, disrupting both the family and the community at large, as many local authorities know only too well.

"Parents discipline children too late," says Rosalind Miles, author of *Children We Deserve*. "The time to start is the moment a child is born." If from the outset parents speak with the voice of kind, caring authority and are consistent in their actions, their children will soon learn to accept that authority and the loving discipline emanating from it.

The Bible contains a fund of information regarding family authority. In the book of Proverbs, the wise man Solomon draws attention to the unity of God-fearing parents before their children, saying: "Listen, my

son, to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother." (Proverbs 1:8) When parents maintain that kind of reasonable solidarity before their children, the children know where they stand. They may try to play one parent against the other in an effort to get their own way, but united parental authority is a safeguard for the youngsters.

The Bible explains that the husband has the prime responsibility for the spiritual welfare of not just his children but also his wife. This is described as *headship*. How is this headship to be exercised? Paul points out that just as Christ is Head of the congregation so

The Bible contains a fund of information regarding family authority

the man is head of his wife. Paul then adds: "Husbands, continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation [his spiritual bride] and delivered up himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25) When a man follows the example of Jesus and exercises headship in a loving way, he will earn the "deep respect" of his wife. (Ephesians 5:33) Children in such a household will also see the value of God-given authority and be encouraged to accept it.—Ephesians 6:1-3.

How can single parents, including those who have lost a mate in death, cope with this issue? Whether father or mother, they can appeal directly to the authority of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. Jesus always spoke with authority—that of his Father and that of the inspired Scriptures.—Matthew 4:1-10; 7:29; John 5:19, 30; 8:28.

o The Bible provides an abundance of valuable principles relating to problems faced by children. By locating these principles and following them, a parent will be able to provide loving and helpful counsel for the children. (Genesis 6:22; Proverbs 13:20; Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Philippians 4:8, 9) Parents can also refer to Bible-based material designed specifically to help them train their children to appreciate the benefits of respecting the authority of the Scriptures.*

The Christian Congregation and Authority

"This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved; listen to him." (Matthew 17:5) These words, uttered by Jehovah God himself, endorsed Jesus as one who speaks with divine authority. What he said is recorded in the four Gospel accounts to which we can easily refer.

Just before his ascension to heaven, Jesus informed his disciples: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth." (Matthew 28:18) As Head of his congregation, not only did Jesus keep a watchful eye on his anointed footstep followers on earth but, since the outpouring of the holy spirit at Pentecost 33 C.E., he has also used them as a channel of truth, as a "faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47; Acts 2:1-36) What has he done to accomplish all of this in order to strengthen the Christian congregation? "When he ascended on high . . . , he gave gifts in men." (Ephesians 4:8) These "gifts in men" are Christian elders, who are appointed by holy spirit and are given the authority to care for the spiritual interests of fellow believers.—Acts 20:28.

For this reason Paul counsels: "Remember

* See the books *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work* and *The Secret of Family Happiness*, both published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith." Since these faithful men follow Jesus' steps closely, it is certainly the course of wisdom to imitate their faith. Then Paul adds: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, ["continually recognizing their authority over you," *The Amplified Bible*] 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." —Hebrews 13:7, 17.

What happens when such direction is disregarded? Some members of the early Christian congregation did just that and became apostates. Hymenaeus and Philetus are mentioned as men who subverted the faith of some and whose empty speeches 'violated what is holy.' One of their assertions was that the resurrection had already taken place, evidently either a spiritual or a symbolic one, and therefore there was no further resurrection in the future under God's Kingdom. —2 Timothy 2:16-18.

The appointed authority came to the rescue. Christian elders were able to refute such arguments because as representatives of Jesus

Single parents can appeal directly to the authority of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ



Christians recognize that proper authorities in the family, in the Christian congregation, and in the community are established for their benefit

Christ, they used the authority of Scripture. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) The same is true today in the Christian congregation, which is described as "a pillar and support of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15) Never will false teachings be allowed to despoil "the pattern of healthful words," preserved for us as a fine trust within the Bible's pages.—2 Timothy 1:13, 14.

While respect for authority is rapidly disappearing in the world, as Christians we recognize that proper authorities in the community, in the family, and in the Christian congregation are established for our benefit. Respect for authority is essential for our well-being physically, emotionally, and spiritually. By accepting and respecting such God-given authority, we will be safeguarded by the greatest authorities—Jehovah God and Jesus Christ—for our eternal good.—Psalm 119:165; Hebrews 12:9.



Precious to Jehovah Are Those Who Love Him

LEANON has been noted for its natural resources since Bible times. (Psalm 72:16; Isaiah 60:13) Especially prized were its majestic cedars, which were much sought after as building material because of their beauty, fragrance, and durability. In the first century, something more precious came out of Lebanon. The Gospel of Mark reports that from Tyre and Sidon, in Lebanon's ancient territory, "a great multitude, on hearing of how many things [Jesus] was doing, came to him."—Mark 3:8.

Likewise today, Lebanon continues to bear fruit that is very precious in Jehovah's eyes. The following experiences highlight this.

- A young Witness named Wissam was asked to give a 30-minute speech to his class at school. Wissam decided that it would be a fine opportunity to give a witness. So he used the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* and prepared a talk on the subject of creation. However, upon seeing the material, Wissam's teacher said that since it was such an important subject, Wissam could extend his talk to 45 minutes.

As Wissam began his talk, his teacher interrupted him and sent for the principal. Soon the principal arrived, and Wissam started over. As she listened to the questions that Wissam posed in the introduction of his talk, the principal got excited and said that all the students should receive a photocopy of the talk.

A little later another teacher, who was passing by, noticed the excitement in the classroom and inquired what was happening. When he was informed, he asked whether



er Wissam was trying to prove creation or evolution. "Creation," came the reply. Upon learning that Wissam was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, the teacher said to the class: "You will see by his talk that science supports creation, not evolution."

It turned out that this teacher had a copy of the *Creation* book and had been using it to deliver lectures at the university! Before leaving, he asked whether he could return the following day with his students so that Wissam could speak to his class. That resulted in another fine witness to Jehovah.

- Twenty-two-year-old Nina was thirsty for the waters of truth. One day her cousin gave her a Bible and introduced her to the Pentecostal Church. Nina read the Bible with pleasure and learned from her reading that Christians should preach, so she started speaking to her acquaintances. Everyone she spoke to asked her: "Are you one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" That puzzled her.

Six years later, Jehovah's Witnesses called at Nina's home and told her about God's Kingdom. At first she tried to find fault with their teachings. However, she found that all their answers were logical and based on the Bible.

What Nina eventually learned—God's name, Jehovah; the blessings of the Kingdom; and so forth—convinced her that she had found the truth. She dedicated her life to God and got baptized. For the past seven years, Nina has served as a full-time evangelizer. Truly, Jehovah blesses those who have real love for him.—1 Corinthians 2:9.



PRESUMPTUOUSNESS LEADS TO DISHONOR

"Has presumptuousness come? Then dishonor will come; but wisdom is with the modest ones."—PROVERBS 11:2.

AN ENVIOUS Levite leads a rebellious mob against Jehovah's appointed authorities. An ambitious prince concocts a devious scheme to usurp his father's throne. An impudent king disregards the explicit instructions of God's prophet. These three Israelites share a common trait: presumptuousness.

² Presumptuousness is a characteristic of the heart that poses a serious threat to all. (Psalm 19:13) The presumptuous person boldly takes liberties without having the authorization to do so. Often, this leads to disaster. In fact, pre-

sumptuousness has ruined kings and toppled empires. (Jeremiah 50:29, 31, 32; Daniel 5:20) It has even ensnared some servants of Jehovah and led them to their ruin.

³ For good reason the Bible states: "Has presumptuousness come? Then dishonor will come; but wisdom is with the modest ones." (Proverbs 11:2) The Bible provides us with examples confirming the truthfulness of this proverb. An examination of some of these will help us to see the danger of overstepping due bounds. Hence, let us consider

1, 2. What is presumptuousness, and in what ways has it led to disaster?

3. How can we learn about the dangers of presumptuousness?

Saul became impatient and acted presumptuously

how envy, ambition, and impatience caused the three men mentioned at the outset to act presumptuously, leading to their dishonor.

Korah—An Envious Rebel

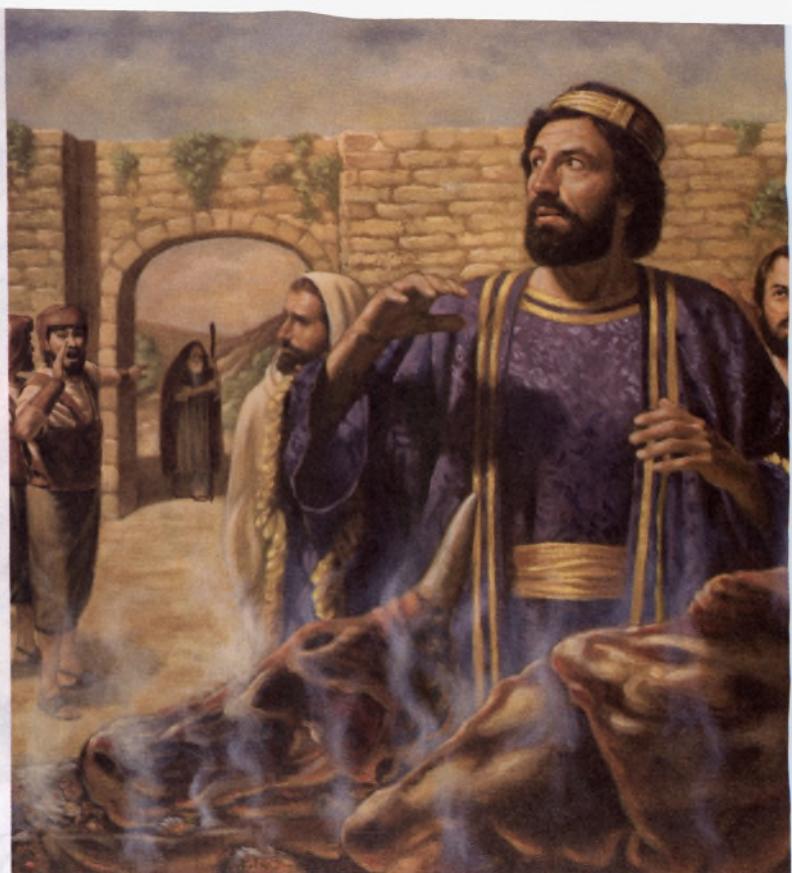
⁴ Korah was a Kohathite Levite, a first cousin of Moses and Aaron. Apparently, he was loyal to Jehovah for decades. Korah was privileged to be among those who were miraculously delivered through the Red Sea, and he likely shared in executing Jehovah's judgment against the calf-worshiping Israelites at Mount Sinai. (Exodus 32:26) Eventually, however, Korah became the ringleader in an uprising against Moses and Aaron that included the Reubenites Dathan, Abiram, and On, along with 250 Israelite chieftains.* "That is enough of you," they said to Moses and Aaron, "because the whole assembly are all of them holy and Jehovah is in their midst. Why, then, should you lift yourselves up above the congregation of Jehovah?"—Numbers 16:1-3.

⁵ After years of faithfulness, why did Korah rebel? Surely Moses' leadership of Israel was not oppressive, for he was "by far the meekest

* Since Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, those of his descendants who were swayed by Korah to rebel might have resented that Moses—a descendant of Levi—had administrative authority over them.

4. (a) Who was Korah, and what historic events was he undoubtedly part of? (b) In his later years, what notorious act did Korah instigate?

5, 6. (a) Why did Korah rebel against Moses and Aaron? (b) Why can it be said that Korah likely undervalued his own place in God's arrangement?



of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground." (Numbers 12:3) Yet, it seems that Korah envied Moses and Aaron and resented their prominence, and this led him to say—wrongly—that they had arbitrarily and selfishly lifted themselves up above the congregation.—Psalm 106:16.

⁶ Part of Korah's problem very likely was that he did not cherish his own privileges in God's arrangement. True, the Kohathite Levites were not all priests, but they were teachers of God's Law. Some also carried the furniture and utensils of the tabernacle when these had to be transported. That was no insignificant task, for the holy utensils could be handled only by individuals who were religiously and morally clean. (Isaiah 52:11) Hence, when Moses confronted Korah, he was, in effect, asking, Do you view your assignment as something so trivial that you must also secure the

priesthood? (Numbers 16:9, 10) Korah failed to realize that the greatest honor is serving Jehovah faithfully according to his arrangement—not the attaining of some special status or position.—Psalm 84:10.

⁷ Moses invited Korah and his men to gather the following morning at the tent of meeting with fire holders and incense. Korah and his men were not authorized to offer incense, since they were not priests. If they came with fire holders and incense, this would clearly indicate that these men still felt that they had a right to act as priests—even after having had an entire night to reconsider the matter. When they presented themselves the next morning, Jehovah rightly expressed his wrath. As for the Reubenites, “the earth opened its mouth and proceeded to swallow them up.” The rest, including Korah, were consumed by fire from God. (Deuteronomy 11:6; Numbers 16:16-35; 26:10) Korah’s presumptuousness led to the ultimate dishonor—God’s disapproval!

Resist the “Tendency to Envy”

⁸ The account of Korah is a warning to us. Since “a tendency to envy” is present in imperfect humans, it can manifest itself even in the Christian congregation. (James 4:5) For example, we might be position conscious. Like Korah, we might envy those who have privileges that we desire. Or we could become like the first-century Christian named Diotrephes. He was highly critical of apostolic authority, evidently because he wanted to be in charge. Indeed, John wrote that Diotrephes “likes to have the first place.”—3 John 9.

⁹ Of course, it is not wrong for a Christian

7. (a) How did Moses deal with Korah and his men? (b) How was Korah’s rebellion brought to a disastrous end?
8. How can “a tendency to envy” manifest itself among Christians?
9. (a) What attitude toward congregation responsibilities do we need to avoid? (b) What is the proper view of our place in God’s arrangement?

man to reach out for congregation responsibilities. Paul even encouraged such a course. (1 Timothy 3:1) However, we should never view privileges of service as badges of merit, as though by attaining them, we have moved up a rung on some so-called ladder of advancement. Remember, Jesus said: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your minister, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave.” (Matthew 20:26, 27) Clearly, it would be wrong to envy those who have greater responsibilities, as if our value to God depended upon our “rank” in his organization. Jesus said: “All you are brothers.” (Matthew 23:8) Yes, whether publisher or pioneer, newly baptized or longtime integrity keeper—all who serve Jehovah whole-souled have a valuable place in his arrangement. (Luke 10:27; 12:6, 7; Galatians 3:28; Hebrews 6:10) It is truly a blessing to work shoulder to shoulder with millions who are striving to apply the Bible’s counsel: “Gird yourselves with lowliness of mind toward one another.”—1 Peter 5:5.

Absalom—An Ambitious Opportunist

¹⁰ The life course of King David’s third son, Absalom, provides a study in ambition. This scheming opportunist tried to curry the favor of those who came to the king for judgment. First he insinuated that David was indifferent to their needs. Then he dropped the subtlety and got right to the point. “O that I were appointed judge in the land,” Absalom intoned, “that to me every man might come that happens to have a legal case or judgment! Then I should certainly do justice to him.” Absalom’s crafty politicking knew no bounds. “When a man drew near to bow down to him,” states the Bible, “he thrust his hand out and grabbed hold of him and kissed him. And Absalom kept doing a thing like this to all Israelites

10. Who was Absalom, and how did he attempt to curry the favor of those coming to the king for judgment?

that would come in for judgment to the king." With what result? "Absalom kept stealing the hearts of the men of Israel."—2 Samuel 15:1-6.

¹¹ Absalom was determined to usurp his father's kingship. Five years earlier, he had David's eldest son, Amnon, murdered, ostensibly in revenge for the rape of Absalom's sister Tamar. (2 Samuel 13:28, 29) However, even then Absalom might have had his sights on the throne, viewing Amnon's murder as a convenient way to eliminate a rival.* In any event, when the time was ripe, Absalom made his move. He had his kingship proclaimed throughout the land.—2 Samuel 15:10.

¹² For a while, Absalom had success, for "the conspiracy kept getting stronger, and the people were continually growing in number with Absalom." In time, King David was forced to flee for his life. (2 Samuel 15:12-17) Soon, though, Absalom's career was cut short when he was slain by Joab, pitched into a hollow, and covered with stones. Imagine—this ambitious man who wanted to be king did not even receive a decent burial upon his death!# Presumptuousness truly led to Absalom's dishonor.—2 Samuel 18:9-17.

Shun Selfish Ambition

Absalom's rise to power and his subsequent fall serve as a lesson for us. In today's cutthroat world, it is common for people to fawn over their superiors, trying to ingratiate themselves to them simply to make an impression.

* Chileab, David's second son, is not mentioned after his birth. Possibly he died sometime before Absalom's uprising.

In Bible times the interment of the body of a deceased individual was an act of considerable importance. Hence, to be deprived of a burial was calamitous and was often an expression of God's disfavor.—Jeremiah 25:32, 33.

11. How did Absalom try to usurp David's throne?
12. Explain how Absalom's presumptuousness led to dishonor.
13. How can an ambitious spirit take root in the heart of a Christian?

sion or perhaps to gain some type of privilege or promotion. At the same time, they might make bragging assertions to their subordinates, hoping to curry their favor and support. If we are not careful, such an ambitious spirit can take root in our heart. Apparently, this happened among some in the first century, making it necessary for the apostles to give strong warnings against such ones.—Galatians 4:17; 3 John 9, 10.

¹⁴ Jehovah has no place in his organization for self-aggrandizing schemers who try to "search out their own glory." (Proverbs 25:27) Indeed, the Bible warns: "Jehovah will cut off all smooth lips, the tongue speaking great things." (Psalm 12:3) Absalom had smooth lips. He spoke swelling things to those whose favor he needed—all to acquire a coveted position of authority. In contrast, how blessed we are to be amid a brotherhood that follows Paul's counsel: "[Do] nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with lowliness of mind [consider] that the others are superior to you."—Philippians 2:3.

Saul—An Impatient King

¹⁵ At one time Saul, who later became king of Israel, was modest. Consider, for example, what happened in his younger years. When God's prophet Samuel spoke favorably of him, Saul humbly replied: "Am I not a Benjaminite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the most insignificant of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? So why have you spoken to me a thing like this?"—1 Samuel 9:21.

Later, however, Saul's modesty vanished. While at war with the Philistines, he withdrew to Gilgal, where he was expected to wait

14. Why should we avoid an ambitious, self-exalting spirit?
15. How did Saul at one time show himself to be modest?
16. In what way did Saul manifest an impatient attitude?

for Samuel to come and make entreaty to God with sacrifices. When Samuel did not come at the appointed time, Saul presumptuously offered the burnt sacrifice himself. Just as he finished, Samuel arrived. "What is it you have done?" Samuel asked. Saul replied: "I saw that the people had been dispersed from me, and you—you did not come within the appointed days . . . So I compelled myself and went offering up the burnt sacrifice."—1 Samuel 13:8-12.

¹⁷ At first glance, Saul's actions might seem justifiable. After all, God's people were "in sore straits," "hard pressed," and trembling because of their desperate situation. (1 Samuel 13:6, 7) Certainly, it is not wrong to take the initiative when circumstances warrant it.* Remember, though, that Jehovah can read hearts and perceive our innermost motives. (1 Samuel 16:7) Hence, he must have seen some factors about Saul that are not directly stated in the Bible account. For example, Jehovah may have seen that Saul's impatience was stirred by pride. Perhaps Saul was deeply irritated that he—the king of all Israel—had to wait for someone he viewed as an old, procrastinating prophet! In any event, Saul felt that Samuel's tardiness gave him the right to take matters into his own hands and to disregard the explicit instructions he had been given. The result? Samuel did not praise Saul's initiative. On the contrary, he chastised Saul, saying: "Your kingdom will not last . . . because you did not keep what Jehovah commanded you." (1 Samuel 13:13, 14) Once again, presumptuousness led to dishonor.

* For example, Phinehas took quick action to halt a scourge that killed tens of thousands of Israelites, and David encouraged his famished men to join him in eating the showbread in "the house of God." Neither course was condemned by God as presumptuous.—Matthew 12:2-4; Numbers 25:7-9; 1 Samuel 21:1-6.

17. (a) At first glance, why might Saul's actions seem justifiable? (b) Why did Jehovah censure Saul for his impatient act?

Guard Against Impatience

¹⁸ The account of Saul's presumptuous act has been recorded in God's Word for our benefit. (1 Corinthians 10:11) It is so easy for us to become annoyed at the imperfections of our brothers. Like Saul, we may become impatient, feeling that if matters are to be handled properly, we must take them into our own hands. Suppose, for example, that a brother excels at certain organizational skills. He is punctual, up-to-date on congregation procedures, and gifted in speaking and teaching. At the same time, he senses that others do not measure up to his meticulous standards, and they are not nearly as efficient as he would like. Does this give him license to express impatience? Should he criticize his brothers, perhaps implying that were it not for his efforts nothing would get done and the congregation would falter? This would be presumptuous!

¹⁹ Really, what holds a congregation of Christians together? Management skills? efficiency? depth of knowledge? Granted, these things are advantageous to the smooth operation of a congregation. (1 Corinthians 14:40; Philippians 3:16; 2 Peter 3:18) However, Jesus

18, 19. (a) Describe how impatience can cause a modern-day servant of God to act presumptuously. (b) What should we remember about the operation of the Christian congregation?

Do You Recall?

- What is presumptuousness?
- How did envy cause Korah to act presumptuously?
- What do we learn from the account of ambitious Absalom?
- How can we avoid the impatient spirit manifested by Saul?

said that his followers would primarily be identified by their love. (John 13:35) That is why caring elders, while orderly, realize that the congregation is not a business that needs rigid management; instead, it is made up of a flock that needs tender care. (Isaiah 32:1, 2; 40:11) Presumptuous disregard for such principles often results in contention. In contrast, godly order produces peace.—1 Corinthians 14:33; Galatians 6:16.

“WISDOM IS WITH THE MODEST ONES”

“What is Jehovah asking back from you but to . . . be modest in walking with your God?”—MICAH 6:8.

A PROMINENT apostle refuses to draw attention to himself. A courageous Israelite judge calls himself the smallest in his father's house. The greatest man who ever lived acknowledges that he does not have unlimited authority. Each of these men displays modesty.

² Modesty is the opposite of presumptuousness. The person who is modest has a sober estimate of his abilities and worth and is free of conceit or vanity. Rather than being proud, boastful, or ambitious, the modest person is ever aware of his limitations. Hence, he respects and gives due consideration to the feelings and views of others.

³ For good reason the Bible states: “Wisdom is with the modest ones.” (Proverbs 11:2) The modest person is wise because he follows a course that God approves, and he avoids a presumptuous spirit that results in dishonor. (Proverbs 8:13; 1 Peter 5:5) The wisdom of

²⁰ The Bible accounts of Korah, Absalom, and Saul clearly show that presumptuousness leads to dishonor, as stated at Proverbs 11:2. However, that same Bible verse adds: “Wisdom is with the modest ones.” What is modesty? What examples from the Bible can help to shed light on this quality, and how can we show modesty today? These questions will be considered in the following article.

20. What will be considered in the following article?

modesty is confirmed by the life course of a number of God's servants. Let us consider the three examples cited in the opening paragraph.

Paul—A ‘Subordinate’ and a ‘Steward’

⁴ Paul was a prominent figure among early Christians, and understandably so. In the course of his ministry, he traveled thousands of miles on sea and land, and he established numerous congregations. In addition, Jehovah blessed Paul with visions and the gift of speaking in foreign tongues. (1 Corinthians 14:18; 2 Corinthians 12:1-5) He also inspired Paul to write 14 letters that are now part of the Christian Greek Scriptures. Clearly, it can be said that Paul's labors exceeded those of all the other apostles.—1 Corinthians 15:10.

⁵ Since Paul was in the forefront of Christian activity, some might expect to find him revel-

1. 2. What is modesty, and how does it differ from presumptuousness?

3. In what way is wisdom “with the modest ones”?

4. What unique privileges did Paul enjoy?

5. How did Paul show that he had a modest view of himself?



Paul's modesty endeared him to his fellow Christians

ing in the limelight, even flaunting his authority. Not so, however, for Paul was modest. He called himself "the least of the apostles," adding: "I am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the congregation of God."

(1 Corinthians 15:9) As a former persecutor of Christians, Paul never forgot that it was only by undeserved kindness that he could have a relationship with God at all, much less enjoy special privileges of service. (John 6:44; Ephesians 2:8) Hence, Paul did not feel that his extraordinary accomplishments in the ministry made him superior to others.—1 Corinthians 9:16.

⁶ Paul's modesty was particularly evident in his dealings with the Corinthians. Apparently, some of them were enamored of those whom they thought to be prominent overseers, including Apollos, Cephas, and Paul himself. (1 Corinthians 1:11-15) But Paul neither solicited the praise of the Corinthians nor exploited their admiration. When visiting them, he did not present himself "with an extravagance of

6. How did Paul show modesty in his dealings with the Corinthians?

speech or of wisdom." Instead, Paul said regarding himself and his companions: "Let a man so appraise us as being subordinates of Christ and stewards of sacred secrets of God."^{*}—1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 4:1.

⁷ Paul even displayed modesty when he had to give strong counsel and direction. He entreated his fellow Christians "by the compassions of God" and "on the basis of love" rather than by the weight of his apostolic authority. (Romans 12:1, 2; Philemon 8, 9) Why did Paul do this? Because he truly viewed himself as a 'fellow worker' of his brothers, not as a 'master of their faith.' (2 Corinthians 1:24) No doubt it was Paul's modesty that helped to make him especially dear to the first-century Christian congregations.—Acts 20:36-38.

* The Greek word translated "subordinates" can refer to a slave who rowed in the lower bank of oars on a large ship. In contrast, "stewards" might be entrusted with more responsibilities, perhaps caring for an estate. Nonetheless, in the eyes of most masters, the steward was as much in servitude as the galley slave.

7. How did Paul display modesty even when giving counsel?

A Modest View of Our Privileges

⁸ Paul set a fine example for Christians today. No matter what responsibilities have been entrusted to us, none of us should feel that we are superior to others. "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing," Paul wrote, "he is deceiving his own mind." (Galatians 6:3) Why? Because "*all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23; 5:12) Yes, we should never forget that all of us have inherited sin and death from Adam. Special privileges do not elevate us from our lowly sinful condition. (Ecclesiastes 9:2) As was true in Paul's case, it is only by undeserved kindness that humans can come into a relationship with God at all, much less serve him in some privileged capacity.—Romans 3:12, 24.

⁹ Realizing this, a person who is modest neither gloats over his privileges nor boasts of his accomplishments. (1 Corinthians 4:7) When giving counsel or direction, he does so as a fellow worker—not as a master. Certainly, it would be wrong for one who excels in certain tasks to solicit praise from or exploit the admiration of fellow believers. (Proverbs 25:27; Matthew 6:2-4) The only praise that is worth anything comes from others—and it should come unsolicited. If it does come, we should not let it cause us to think more of ourselves than is necessary.—Proverbs 27:2; Romans 12:3.

8, 9. (a) Why should we have a modest view of ourselves? (b) How can those who have a measure of responsibility display modesty?

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Only Way to Eradicate Hate

Sacrifices That Pleased God

Are You a "Full-Grown" Christian?

¹⁰ When we are entrusted with a measure of responsibility, modesty will help us to avoid putting undue emphasis on ourselves, creating the impression that the congregation is thriving solely because of our efforts and abilities. For example, we might be especially gifted at teaching. (Ephesians 4:11, 12) In all modesty, however, we must recognize that some of the greatest lessons learned at a congregation meeting are not delivered from the platform. Are you not encouraged when you see, for example, the single parent who regularly comes to the Kingdom Hall with children in tow? Or the depressed soul who faithfully comes to meetings despite persistent feelings of worthlessness? Or the youth who steadily makes spiritual advancement in spite of bad influences in school and elsewhere? (Psalm 84:10) These individuals may not be in the limelight. The tests of integrity they face go largely unnoticed by others. Yet, they may be as "rich in faith" as those who have more prominence. (James 2:5) After all, in the end it is faithfulness that wins Jehovah's favor.—Matthew 10:22; 1 Corinthians 4:2.

Gideon—"The Smallest" in His Father's House

¹¹ Gideon, a stalwart young man of the tribe of Manasseh, lived during a turbulent time in Israel's history. For seven years, God's people had suffered under Midianite oppression. However, the time had now come for Jehovah to deliver his people. Hence, an angel appeared to Gideon and said: "Jehovah is with you, you valiant, mighty one." Gideon was modest, so he did not bask in the glory of this unexpected compliment. Instead, he respectfully said to the angel: "Excuse me, my lord, but if Jehovah is with us, then why has all this come upon us?" The angel clarified matters and told Gideon: "You will certainly save Israel out of

10. Explain how some who may appear to be lowly may really be "rich in faith."

11. In what way did Gideon show modesty in speaking with God's angel?



Gideon used discretion in carrying out God's will

molish his father's altar to Baal and to cut down the sacred pole that stood alongside it. This assignment would take courage, but Gideon also showed modesty and discretion in the way he carried it out. Instead of making a public spectacle of himself, Gideon worked under cover of night when he would most likely pass unnoticed. Furthermore, Gideon approached his assignment with due caution. He took along ten servants —perhaps so that some could stand guard while the rest helped him to destroy the altar and the sacred pole.* In any event, with Jehovah's blessing, Gideon carried out his assignment, and in time he was used by God to liberate Israel from the Midianites. —Judges 6:25-27.

Displaying Modesty and Discretion

¹³ There is much we can learn from Gideon's modesty. For example, how do we respond when a privilege of service is extended to us? Do we think first of the prominence or prestige that will result? Or do we modestly and prayerfully

* Gideon's discretion and caution should not be misinterpreted as a sign of cowardice. On the contrary, his courage is confirmed by Hebrews 11:32-38, which includes Gideon among those who "were made powerful" and who "became valiant in war."

13, 14. (a) How can we show modesty when a privilege of service is extended to us? (b) How did Brother A. H. Macmillan set a fine example in displaying modesty?

Midian's palm." How did Gideon respond? Instead of hungrily seizing the assignment as an opportunity to make himself a national hero, Gideon replied: "Excuse me, Jehovah. With what shall I save Israel? Look! My thousand is the least in Manasseh, and I am the smallest in my father's house." What modesty!—Judges 6: 11-15.

¹² Before sending Gideon into battle, Jehovah tested him. How? Gideon was told to de-

12. How did Gideon show discretion in carrying out his assignment?



Jesus, the Son of God, shows modesty in all that he does

consider whether we can fulfill the demands of the assignment? Brother A. H. Macmillan, who finished his earthly course in 1966, set a fine example in this regard. C. T. Russell, the first president of the Watch Tower Society, once asked Brother Macmillan for his thoughts on who might take charge of the work in his absence. In the discussion that followed, Brother Macmillan did not once promote himself, though it would have been quite convenient for him to do so. In the end, Brother Russell invited Brother Macmillan to consider accepting the assignment. "I stood there half dazed," Brother Macmillan wrote years later. "I did think it over, very seriously, and prayed about it for some time before I finally told him I would be happy to do all that I could do to assist him."

¹⁴ Not long afterward, Brother Russell passed away, leaving the office of the Watch Tower Society's presidency vacant. Since Brother Macmillan was in charge during Broth-

er Russell's final preaching tour, a brother remarked to him: "Mac, you have a strong chance of getting in yourself. You were Brother Russell's special representative when he was gone, and he told all of us to do as you say. Well, he went away and never did return. It looks like you're the man to carry on." Brother Macmillan responded: "Brother, that's not the way to look at this matter. This is the Lord's work and the only position you get in the Lord's organization is what the Lord sees fit to give you; and I am sure I'm not the man for the job." Then Brother Macmillan recommended someone else for the position. Like Gideon, he had a modest view of himself —a view we do well to adopt.

¹⁵ We too should be modest in the manner in which we carry out our assignment. Gideon was discreet, and he strove not to anger his opposers unnecessarily. Similarly, in our preaching work, we should be modest and discreet about how we talk to others. True, we are engaged in a spiritual warfare to overturn "strongly entrenched things" and "reasonings." (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5) But we should not talk down to others or give them any valid cause for taking offense at our message. Instead, we should respect their views, emphasize what we may hold in common, and then focus on the positive aspects of our message. —Acts 22:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:22; Revelation 21:4.

15. What are some practical ways in which we can use discernment when we preach to others?

Jesus—The Supreme Example of Modesty

¹⁶ The finest example of modesty is that of Jesus Christ.* Despite his intimate relationship with his Father, Jesus did not hesitate to acknowledge that some matters were beyond the scope of his authority. (John 1:14) For instance, when the mother of James and John requested that her two sons sit beside Jesus in his kingdom, Jesus said: "This sitting down at my right hand and at my left is not mine to give." (Matthew 20:20-23) On another occasion, Jesus freely admitted: "I cannot do a single thing of my own initiative . . . I seek, not my own will, but the will of him that sent me."—John 5:30; 14:28; Philippians 2:5, 6.

¹⁷ Jesus was superior to imperfect humans in every way, and he possessed unmatched authority from his Father, Jehovah. Nevertheless, Jesus was modest in his dealings with his followers. He did not overwhelm them with an impressive display of knowledge. He showed sensitivity and compassion and took their human needs into consideration. (Matthew 15:32; 26:40, 41; Mark 6:31) Thus, although Jesus was perfect, he was not a perfectionist. He never demanded more of his disciples than they could give, and he never put upon them more than they could bear. (John 16:12) No wonder so many found him to be refreshing!—Matthew 11:29.

Imitate Jesus' Example of Modesty

¹⁸ If the greatest man who ever lived showed modesty, how much more so should we. Imperfect humans are often reluctant to admit that they simply do not possess absolute au-

* Since modesty includes an awareness of one's limitations, Jehovah cannot rightly be spoken of as being modest. However, he is humble.—Psalm 18:35.

16. How did Jesus show that he had a modest view of himself?

17. How did Jesus show modesty in his dealings with others?

18, 19. How can we imitate Jesus' modesty in (a) the way we view ourselves, and (b) the way we treat others?

thority. In imitation of Jesus, however, Christians strive to be modest. They are not too proud to give responsibility to those who are qualified to have it; nor are they haughty and unwilling to accept direction from those who are authorized to give it. Showing a cooperative spirit, they allow all things in the congregation to take place "decently and by arrangement."—1 Corinthians 14:40.

¹⁹ Modesty will also move us to be reasonable in our expectations of others and to be considerate of their needs. (Philippians 4:5) We may possess certain abilities and strengths that others may lack. Yet, if we are modest, we will not always expect others to perform as we would like them to. Knowing that each person has his own limitations, we will in all modesty make allowances for the shortcomings of others. Peter wrote: "Above all things, have intense love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."—1 Peter 4:8.

²⁰ As we have learned, wisdom is indeed with the modest ones. What, though, if you find that you have inclinations toward immodesty or presumptuousness? Do not be discouraged. Instead, follow the example of David, who prayed: "From presumptuous acts hold your servant back; do not let them dominate me." (Psalm 19:13) By imitating the faith of men like Paul, Gideon, and—above everyone else—Jesus Christ, we will personally come to experience the truth of the words: "Wisdom is with the modest ones."—Proverbs 11:2.

20. What can we do to overcome any inclination toward immodesty?

Do You Recall?

- What is modesty?
- How can we imitate Paul's modesty?
- What can we learn about modesty from Gideon's example?
- How did Jesus set the supreme example of modesty?



Why Do They Have No Children?

DELE and Fola,* a married couple, lived and worked at the Watch Tower Society's branch office in Nigeria. Shortly after they began serving there, Fola's mother came to visit. She had traveled far to discuss a matter of great concern to her, one that had given her many a sleepless night.

"You do such good things for me," she said to them. "You send gifts, and you visit me. Those expressions of love are precious to me. But they distress me too because I always wonder who will do such things for you when you are my age? You have been married for two years now, and you have no children. Don't you think it's time for you to leave Bethel and start a family?"

Mother reasoned like this: Dele and Fola have spent enough time at Bethel. Now it is time for them to think of their future. Surely other people can take over their work. Dele and Fola need not give up the full-time ministry, but they can take up another avenue of ser-

vice, one that will allow them to have children and experience the joys of parenthood.

Mother's Concern

Mother's concern was understandable. The desire to bear children is fundamental and common to all cultures and times. Childbearing rouses profound feelings of joy and hope. "The fruitage of the belly is a reward," says the Bible. Yes, the ability to bear children is a precious gift from our loving Creator.—Psalm 127:3.

In many societies, married couples face immense social pressure to bear children. For example, in Nigeria, where the average woman gives birth to six children, it is common at weddings to hear well-wishers say to the newlyweds: "Nine months from now, we expect to hear a baby crying in your house." As a wedding present, the bride and groom may receive a baby crib. Mothers-in-law closely watch the calendar. If the bride is not pregnant within a year or so, they probe to see if there is any problem that they can help to solve.

To many mothers the reason that a couple gets married is to bear children and to carry on the family line. Fola's mother said to her: "Why did you get married if you are not going to have children? Someone gave birth to you; you should give birth to your own children."

Apart from that, there are practical matters to consider. In many African nations, there are few governmental provisions to care for the elderly. Customarily, it is the children who look after their aged parents, just as those parents looked after them when they were young. So Fola's mother reasoned that unless her children had children of their own, they would, in later years, risk being lonely, unwanted, and impoverished, having no one to bury them when they die.

Throughout much of Africa, it is considered a curse not to have children. In some areas, women are even expected to prove their ability to bear children before marriage. Many wom-

* Names have been changed.

en who are not able to conceive will frantically seek medicines and cures to try to reverse their barren condition.

In view of these attitudes, married couples who deliberately refrain from having children are thought to be robbing themselves of something good. They are often viewed as odd, shortsighted, and pitiable.

Joy and Responsibility

Jehovah's people recognize that while there is joy in rearing children, there is also responsibility. The Bible, at 1 Timothy 5:8, says: "Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith."

Parents must provide for their families both materially and spiritually, and this takes considerable time and effort. They do not have the attitude that since God provides children, it is left to God to care for them. They realize that rearing children according to Bible principles is a full-time responsibility assigned by God to parents; it is not one that should be delegated to others.—Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

The task of rearing children is especially difficult in these "last days" of "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Apart from worsening economic conditions, the increasing godlessness of society adds to the challenges of child rearing today. Even so, throughout the world, countless Christian couples have taken up this challenge and are successfully rearing godly children "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) Jehovah loves and blesses these parents for their hard work.

Why Some Remain Childless

Many Christian couples, on the other hand, do not have children. Some are infertile and yet do not adopt children. Other couples who have the ability to produce offspring decide not to do so. Such couples do not remain child-

less because they shirk responsibility or are afraid to meet the challenges of parenthood. Rather, they have determined to give their full attention to different avenues of the full-time ministry that the rearing of children would not allow. Some serve as missionaries. Others serve Jehovah in the traveling work or at Bethel.

Like all Christians, they realize that there is an urgent work to do. Jesus said: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." This work is being done today. It is a vital work, since "the end" will mean destruction for those who have not heeded the good news.—Matthew 24:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8.

Ours is a period similar to the time when Noah and his family constructed the gigantic ark that preserved them through the great Flood. (Genesis 6:13-16; Matthew 24:37) Although Noah's three sons were all married, none fathered children until after the Deluge. One reason for that may have been that these couples wanted to devote their full attention and energy to the work at hand. Another may have been reluctance to bring children into a debased and violent world where "the badness of man was abundant . . . and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only bad all the time."—Genesis 6:5.

While this does not imply that it is wrong to have children today, many Christian couples decline to have children so as to become more fully involved in the urgent work that Jehovah has given his people to do. Some couples have waited for a time before having children; others have decided to remain childless and consider the possibility of bearing children in Jehovah's righteous new world. Is this shortsighted? Are they missing out on life? Are they to be pitied?

Secure and Joyful Lives

Dele and Fola, mentioned earlier, have now been married for over ten years, and they

remain determined to continue childless. "Our relatives still pressure us to have children," says Dele. "Their main concern is our future security. We always express appreciation for their consideration, but we tactfully explain that we are very happy in what we are doing. As to security, we point out that our trust is in Jehovah, who cares for the welfare of all those who remain faithful and loyal to him. We also explain that having children does not guarantee that parents will enjoy their care when old. Some people care little for their parents, others are not able to help, and still others die before their parents do. On the other hand, our future is certain with Jehovah."

Dele and others like him confidently trust in Jehovah's promise to his faithful servants: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) They also believe that "the hand of Jehovah has not become too short that it cannot save, nor has his ear become too heavy that it cannot hear."—Isaiah 59:1.

Another reason for confidence comes from observing how Jehovah sustains his faithful servants. King David wrote: "A young man I used to be, I have also grown old, and yet I have not seen anyone righteous left entirely." Think about that. Do you know of any faithful servant of Jehovah who has been "left entirely"?—Psalm 37:25.

Rather than looking back with regret, those who have spent their life serving Jehovah and their fellow Christians reflect on it with satisfaction. Brother Iro Umah has been in full-time service for 45 years and now serves as a traveling overseer in Nigeria. He says: "Though my wife and I are childless, we keep in mind that Jehovah has always cared for us both spiritually and materially. We have lacked nothing. He will not abandon us as we grow older. These years in full-time service have proved to be the happiest in our life. We are grateful that we can serve our brothers, and our brothers appreciate our service, and they help us."

While many couples have produced no fleshly children, they have produced children of a different kind: Christian disciples who worship Jehovah. The apostle John was about 100 years of age when he wrote: "No greater cause for thankfulness do I have than these things, that I should be hearing that my children go on walking in the truth." (3 John 4) The faithfulness of John's "children"—those he introduced to "the truth"—brought him great joy.

The same joy abounds today. Bernice, a Nigerian, has been married for 19 years and remains childless by choice. For the past 14 years, she has served as a pioneer. As she approaches the time of life when it will no longer be possible for her to bear children of her own, she feels no regret about devoting her life to disciple making. She says: "I feel happy to see my spiritual children growing up. Even if I had children of my own, I doubt that they would be closer to me than those I have helped to learn the truth. They treat me as though I were their natural mother, discussing with me their joys and problems and asking for my advice. They write letters, and we visit one another."

"Some view it as a curse not to have natural children. They say that you will suffer in your old age. But I don't see it that way. I know that as long as I serve Jehovah whole-souled, he will reward me and look after me. He will never throw me out when I get old."

Loved and Valued by God

Those who have given birth and have raised children who "go on walking in the truth" have much to be thankful for. Little wonder the Bible says: "The father of a righteous one will without fail be joyful; the one becoming father to a wise one will also rejoice in him. Your father and your mother will rejoice, and she that gave birth to you will be joyful!"—Proverbs 23:24, 25.

Those Christians who have not had the joy of bringing children into the world have been



**Childless couples have been blessed
with a loving spiritual family**

blessed in other ways. Many of these couples have played a vital role in furthering Kingdom interests in a large way. Over the years, they have gained experience, wisdom, and skills that enable them to make a valuable contribution to the Kingdom work. Many are at the forefront of the work.

Although they have remained childless for the sake of Kingdom interests, Jehovah has blessed them with a loving spiritual family that deeply appreciates the sacrifices that they have made. It is as Jesus said: "No one has left [literally, "let go off"] house or brothers or sis-

ters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not get a hundredfold now in this period of time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields . . . and in the coming system of things everlasting life."—Mark 10:29, 30.

How precious to Jehovah are all those who are faithful! All such loyal ones, both those who have children and those who do not, are assured by the apostle Paul: "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name, in that you have ministered to the holy ones and continue ministering."—Hebrews 6:10.



FROM BUILDING WEAPONS TO SAVING LIVES

AS TOLD BY
ISIDOROS ISMAILIDIS

I was on my knees as tears rolled down my cheeks. "Oh, God, my conscience tells me that I cannot continue to work in weapons production," I said in prayer. "I have tried hard to find another job, but I have not been able to. Tomorrow, I will turn in my resignation. Please, Jehovah, do not let our four children starve for bread." How did I reach this point?

LIFE was peaceful and simple in Drama, northern Greece, where I was born in 1932. My father used to talk to me about what he wanted me to do. He encouraged me to go to the United States to receive an education. After Greece was pillaged during World War II, a prevalent motto among Greeks was: "You can steal our possessions, but you can never steal what is in our minds." I was determined to pursue a higher education and acquire something that nobody would ever be able to steal.

From a young age, I had joined various

youth groups sponsored by the Greek Orthodox Church. There we were told to avoid dangerous sects. I specifically remember one group—Jehovah's Witnesses—being mentioned, since they supposedly represented the antichrist.

After graduating from a technical school in Athens in 1953, I traveled to Germany to see if I could find a job and go to school at the same time. But that did not work out, so I traveled to other countries. After a few weeks, I found myself without any money at a port in Belgium. I remember walking into a church, sit-

ting down, and crying so hard that there were tears on the floor in front of me. I prayed that if God helped me get to the United States, I would not pursue material things but I would get an education and strive to be a good Christian and a good citizen. Finally in 1957, I arrived there.

New Life in the United States

Life in the United States was difficult for an immigrant who did not know the language and who had no money. I worked two jobs at night and struggled to go to school during the day. I attended several colleges and earned an associate degree. Then I went to the University of California at Los Angeles and earned a bachelor of science degree in applied physics. The words of my father about getting an education kept me going during these difficult years.

About this time, I met a lovely Greek girl, Ekaterini, and we were married in 1964. Our first son was born three years later, and in less than four years, we had two more sons and a daughter. It was indeed challenging to support a family and at the same time study at the university.

I was working for the U.S. Air Force at a missile and space company in Sunnyvale, California. I was involved with a variety of air and space projects, including the Agena and Apollo programs. I even received medals for my contribution to the Apollo 8 and Apollo 11 missions. After that, I continued my education and became heavily involved in various military space projects. At this point, I thought I had it all—a lovely wife, four wonderful children, a prestigious job, and a nice house.

A Persistent Fellow

In early 1967, at work, I met Jim, a very humble and kind man. Jim always seemed to have a smile on his face, and he never turned down an invitation to take a coffee break with me. He used these opportunities to share information from the Bible with me. Jim told

me that he had been studying with Jehovah's Witnesses.

I was shocked to hear that Jim had become involved with this religious group. How was it possible for such a nice person to fall victim to the sect of the antichrist? However, I could not resist Jim's personal interest in me and his kindness. It seemed that every day he had something different for me to read. For example, one day he came to my office and said: "Isidoros, this article in *The Watchtower* talks about strengthening family life. Take it home, and read it with your wife." I told him I would read the issue, but later I went to the restroom and tore the magazine in small pieces and threw them into the trash bin.

For three years, I destroyed every book and magazine that Jim gave me. Being prejudiced against Jehovah's Witnesses, yet trying to keep Jim as my friend, I thought it best to listen to what he had to say and then dismiss it immediately.

*When I was a soldier
in Greece, 1951*



From those discussions, however, I saw that most of the things I believed and practiced were not based on the Bible. I realized that the teachings of Trinity, hellfire, and immortality of the soul were not Scriptural. (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Ezekiel 18:4; John 20:17) As a proud Greek Orthodox, I did not want to admit openly that Jim was right. But since he always used the Bible and never gave his personal opinion, I finally recognized that this man had a valuable message from the Bible for me.

My wife sensed that something was happening, and she asked if I had spoken with my friend who was associated with the Witnesses. When I answered yes, she said: "Let's go to any other church but Jehovah's Witnesses." Soon, however, my wife and I, along with our children, were regularly attending meetings of the Witnesses.

A Tough Decision

As I studied the Bible, I came across these words of the prophet Isaiah: "They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4) I asked myself, 'How can a servant of a peace-loving God be employed in the design and production of destructive weapons?' (Psalm 46:9) It did not take long for me to conclude that I had to change my employment.

Understandably, this was a major challenge. I had a prestigious job. I had struggled through years of hard work, education, and sacrifices to get to this point. I had climbed the corporate ladder, and here I was faced with giving up my career. However, my deep love for Jehovah and



My family in 1996: (left to right, back) Gregory, Christos, Toula; (front) Lakes, Ekaterini, and me

a keen desire to do his will finally prevailed.
—Matthew 7:21.

I decided to pursue employment with a company in Seattle, Washington. To my disappointment, however, I soon found that I was even more involved with work that did not harmonize with Isaiah 2:4. My efforts to work only on other projects failed, and again my conscience bothered me. I saw clearly that I could not keep my job and at the same time retain a clean conscience.—1 Peter 3:21.

It became clear that we were going to have to make important changes. In less than six months, we changed our life-style and reduced our family expenses by half. Then we sold our luxurious house and bought a small one in Denver, Colorado. I was now ready for the final leap—quitting my job. I typed out my resignation, explaining my conscientious position. That night, after the children had gone to bed, I knelt down with my wife and we prayed to Jehovah, as described in the beginning of this article.

In less than a month, we moved to Denver, and two weeks later, in July 1975, my wife and I were baptized. For six months I was un-

able to find a job, and we were slowly eating up our savings. By the seventh month, our savings account balance was less than the monthly mortgage on the house. I started looking for any odd job I could find, but immediately thereafter I got an engineering job. The salary was only about half of what I had been making; even so, it was much more than what I had asked Jehovah for. How happy I was that I had placed spiritual interests first!—Matthew 6:33.

Bringing Up Our Children to Love Jehovah

In the meantime Ekaterini and I were busy with the challenging job of bringing up our four children in line with godly principles. Happily, we have seen all of them, with Jehovah's help, become mature Christians, devoting their lives fully to the important work of Kingdom preaching. Our three sons, Christos, Lakes, and Gregory have all graduated from the Ministerial Training School and are now serving in various assignments, visiting and



Lakes: My father despised hypocrisy. He tried very hard not to be hypocritical, especially in setting the right example for his family.

He often told us: "If you dedicate your life to Jehovah, that means something. You should be willing to make sacrifices for Jehovah. That is what being a Christian is all about." These words have stuck with me and have enabled me to follow his example in making sacrifices for Jehovah.

strengthening congregations. Toula, our daughter, works as a volunteer at the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York. Our hearts were touched as we saw all of them sacrifice promising careers and high-paying jobs in order to serve Jehovah.



Christos: I have greatly appreciated my parents' whole-souled loyalty to Jehovah and their strong commitment to their responsibility as parents. As a family, we did everything together—from our service to our vacations. Although they could have become involved in so many other things, my parents kept their life simple and focused on the ministry. Today, I know I am truly happiest when I am fully engrossed in Jehovah's service.

Many have asked what lies behind such successful child rearing. Of course, there is no fixed formula for bringing up children, but we diligently tried to instill love for Jehovah and neighbor in their hearts. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Matthew 22:37-39) The children learned that we cannot tell Jehovah that we love him unless our deeds show that we do.

One day a week, usually Saturday, we participated in the ministry as a family. We regularly had a family Bible study on Monday evenings after dinner, and we also had a Bible study with each individual child. When the children were younger, we studied with each child for brief periods several times a week, and as they grew older, we had longer studies once a week. During these studies, our children opened up and freely discussed their problems with us.

We also enjoyed upbuilding recreation as a family. We liked to play musical instruments together, and each child loved to play his or her favorite songs. Some weekends, we invited other families for upbuilding association. We also took vacation trips as a family. On one such trip, we spent two weeks exploring the mountains of Colorado and working with the local congregations in the field ministry. Our children fondly remember working at district conventions in various departments

and helping with Kingdom Hall construction in different places. When we took the children to Greece to see their relatives, they were also able to meet many faithful Witnesses who had been in prison for their faith. This made a deep impression on them, helping them to resolve to remain steadfast and courageous for the truth.

Of course, at times some of the children misbehaved or made poor choices regarding association. At other times, we created problems for them by being perhaps overly restrictive in some areas. But resorting to the "mental-regulating of Jehovah," as found in the Bible, helped set matters straight for all of us.—Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

The Happiest Time of My Life

After our children took up the full-time ministry, Ekaterini and I started thinking seriously about what we could do to expand our share in this lifesaving work. Thus, in 1994, after I retired early, we both started serving as regular pioneers. Our ministry includes visiting local colleges and universities, where we witness to the students and conduct Bible studies with some of them. Because I can sympathize with their difficulties—since I was in their shoes not so many years ago—I have had much success in helping them to learn about



Gregory: More than my parents' words of encouragement to me to expand my ministry, their example and the evidence of their joy in Jehovah's service moved me to reevaluate my circumstances, push aside any worries and concerns about starting full-time service, and apply myself more fully to Jehovah's work. I thank my parents for helping me find the joy that comes from exerting myself.



Toula: My parents always emphasized that our relationship with Jehovah is the most precious thing that we could ever possess and that the only way we can ever be truly happy is by giving Jehovah our best. They made Jehovah very real to us. My father often told us that there is an indescribable feeling about being able to go to bed at night with a clean conscience, knowing that you have tried your best to make Jehovah happy.

Jehovah. What a joy to have studied with students from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mexico, Thailand, and Turkey! I also enjoy telephone witnessing, especially to people who speak my native tongue.

Even though I have many limitations because of my heavy Greek accent and advancing age, I have always tried to make myself available and have the spirit of Isaiah, who proclaimed: "Here I am! Send me." (Isaiah 6:8) We have had the joy of helping more than half a dozen people to dedicate their lives to Jehovah. This has definitely been the happiest time for us.

Once, my whole life revolved around building monstrous weapons for killing fellow humans. Jehovah, through his undeserved kindness, however, opened the way for me and my family to become his dedicated servants and to devote our lives to bringing to people the good news of everlasting life on a paradise earth. As I reflect on the challenging decisions I had to make, the words of Malachi 3:10 come to mind: "'Test me out, please, in this respect,' Jehovah of armies has said, 'whether I shall not open to you people the floodgates of the heavens and actually empty out upon you a blessing until there is no more want.'" He has indeed done so—to our heart's content!

Why Be Reasonable in Our Expectations?



HOPES realized and aspirations attained give us a sense of satisfaction. Admittedly, though, many of our dreams and expectations do not turn out the way we wish. Recurring disappointments in life can make us feel exasperated with ourselves and even with others. A wise man aptly observed: "Expectation postponed is making the heart sick."—Proverbs 13:12.

What are some factors that can lead to feelings of disappointment? How can we work at being reasonable in our expectations? Furthermore, why is it to our benefit to do so?

Expectations and Disappointments

With the fast pace of life today, the more we try to keep up, the further we seem to fall behind. Demands on our time and energy can be unrelenting, and when we fail to get done what we set out to do, there is a tendency to come down on ourselves. We could even begin to feel as though we are letting others down. Cynthia, a wife and mother who knows the pressures of parenting, says: "Being inconsistent in correcting my children and feeling that I am not adequately training them is exasperating." Stephanie, a teenager, says regarding her education: "I don't have enough time to do everything I want to do, and that triggers feelings of impatience in me."

Unreasonably high expectations easily turn into perfectionism, and this can be most frustrating. Ben, a young married man, confesses: "When I examine my actions, thoughts,

or feelings, I always see how they could have been better. I am constantly looking for perfection, and this leads to impatience, frustration, and disappointment." Gail, a Christian wife, says: "Perfectionist thinking does not allow for failure. We want to be supermoms and superwives. We have to be productive to be happy, so wasted effort irritates us."

Yet another factor that can lead to personal disappointment is deteriorating health and old age. Diminished mobility and energy magnify our limitations and add to feelings of frustration. "I felt impatient with myself for not being able to accomplish things that were so easy and natural before I got sick," acknowledges Elizabeth.

The foregoing is a sampling of what can trigger feelings of disappointment. Left unchecked, such feelings can even lead us to believe that we are not appreciated by others. So, what positive measures can we take to cope with disappointments and to cultivate reasonable expectations?

Ways to Cultivate Reasonable Expectations

First, remember that Jehovah is reasonable and understanding. Psalm 103:14 reminds us: "He himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." Knowing our capabilities and limitations, Jehovah expects from us only what we are able to give. And one thing he does ask of us is "to be modest in walking with [our] God."—Micah 6:8.

Jehovah also urges us to turn to him in prayer. (Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17) How, though, does that help us? Prayer stabilizes and balances our thinking. Fervent prayer is an acknowledgment that we need help—it is a mark of modesty and humility. Jehovah is eager to respond to our prayers by giving us his holy spirit, the fruitage of which includes love, kindness, goodness, and self-control. (Luke 11:13; Galatians 5:22, 23) Prayer also alleviates anxiety and frustration. Through prayer, “you derive comfort unknown from any other source,” says Elizabeth. Kevin concurs: “I pray for a calm heart and a clear mind so that I can deal with a problem. Jehovah never lets me down.” The apostle Paul knew the precious value of prayer. That is why he recommended: “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.” (Philippians 4: 6, 7) Yes, communicating with Jehovah really works to help us cultivate reasonable expectations of ourselves and of others.

Occasionally, though, we need immediate reassurance. A word at the right time is good. Confidential talk with a trusted and mature friend can help us get a fresh view of what is causing us to feel disappointed or anxious. (Proverbs 15:23; 17:17; 27:9) Youths who struggle with frustrations learn that seeking parental advice helps them find balance. Kandi appreciatively acknowledges: “Loving direction from my parents has made me more reasonable and balanced and more of a pleasure to be around.” Yes, the reminder at Proverbs 1:8, 9 is most timely: “Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother. For they are a wreath of attractiveness to your head and a fine necklace to your throat.”

The consequences of perfectionist thinking are well summed up in the adage: “To expect

life to be tailored to our specifications is to invite frustration.” To avoid this, an adjustment in thinking is required. Humility and modesty—having a realistic view of our limitations—will most certainly nurture in us balanced and reasonable expectations. Appropriately, Romans 12:3 cautions us “not to think more of [ourselves] than it is necessary to think.” Additionally, Philippians 2:3 encourages us to have lowliness of mind and to consider others to be superior.

Elizabeth, mentioned earlier, was impatient with herself because of her sickness. For her, time was needed to get Jehovah’s view of matters and to feel comforted in knowing that he does not forget our service. Colin is immobilized as a result of a debilitating illness. Initially, he entertained feelings that his ministry was almost worthless compared to what he had been doing while in good health. By meditating on such scriptures as 2 Corinthians 8:12, he was able to shake these feelings. This verse says: “If the readiness is there first, it is especially acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have.” “Although I have much less to give,” says Colin, “I can still give, and that is acceptable to Jehovah.” At Hebrews 6:10, we are reminded: “God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name.”

How, then, can we determine whether our expectations are reasonable? Ask yourself, ‘Do my expectations go hand in hand with God’s expectations?’ Galatians 6:4 states: “Let each one prove what his own work is, and then he will have cause for exultation in regard to himself alone, and not in comparison with the other person.” Remember, Jesus said: “My yoke is kindly and my load is light.” Yes, as Christians, we do have a yoke to bear, but it is “kindly” and “light,” and Jesus promised that it would be refreshing if we learn to carry it properly.—Matthew 11:28-30.



Reasonable Expectations Bring Rewards

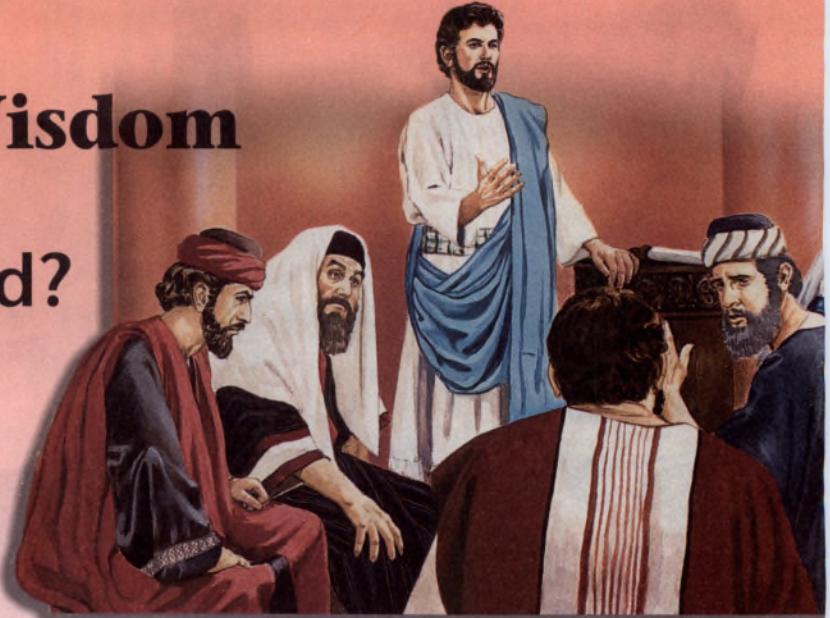
Immediate and lasting rewards do come from listening to and applying the counsel of God's Word as we work at cultivating reasonable expectations. For one thing, this has a favorable effect on us physically. Jennifer, who has benefited from Jehovah's reminders, acknowledges: "I have more energy and enthusiasm for life." Appropriately, Proverbs 4:21, 22 urges us to pay attention to the sayings of Jehovah with our eyes and heart, "for they are life to those finding them and health to all their flesh."

Another reward is mental and emotional well-being. "When I expose my mind and heart to God's Word, I find I am always a happier person," says Theresa. True, we will still experience disappointments in life. Yet, we will be able to bear them more readily. "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you," urges James 4:8. Jehovah also promises to strengthen us in facing life's challenges and to bless us with peace.—Psalm 29:11.

Cultivating reasonable expectations can help us cope with frustrations and disappointments

Having reasonable expectations enables us to maintain spiritual stability. This too is a blessing. We can keep a clear focus on the more important things in life. (Philippians 1:10) Our goals are then realistic and attainable, which brings greater joy and contentment. We will be more willing to entrust ourselves to Jehovah, knowing that he will make things work out for the best. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time," says Peter. (1 Peter 5:6) Can there be anything more rewarding than to be honored by Jehovah?

Godly Wisdom How Is It Manifested?



“THE wisdom of the needy one is despised, and his words are not listened to.” With these words, wise King Solomon concluded the story of a lowly but wise man who saved an entire city from destruction. Sadly, though, “no man remembered that needy man.”—Ecclesiastes 9:14-16.

Humans tend to look down on people of little means, even if these poor ones have performed noble deeds. This was true in Jesus’ case. Isaiah prophesied about him: “He was despised and was avoided by men, a man meant for pains and for having acquaintance with sickness.” (Isaiah 53:3) Jesus was despised by some simply because he did not have the status or prominence of the leaders of his day. Yet, he possessed wisdom that

was far greater than that of any sinful human. People in Jesus’ hometown refused to acknowledge that this “carpenter’s son” manifested such wisdom and performed such powerful works. That, however, was a serious mistake, for the account goes on to say that Jesus “did not do many powerful works there on account of their lack of faith.” What a loss for those people!—Matthew 13:54-58.

May we not make the same mistake. “Wisdom is proved righteous by its works,” said Jesus. Those who are doing God’s work and imparting heavenly wisdom are distinguished, not by their status or social standing, but by the “fine fruit” they manifest—their Bible-based faith and deeds.—Matthew 7:18-20; 11:19.

Wise men often say that the best way to learn about God is to study His Word. That is true, but it is also important to remember that God’s Word is not just a collection of rules and regulations. It is a living, breathing truth that can bring us closer to God if we let it speak to our hearts. That is why it is so important to study the Word of God regularly, and to let it guide our lives. By doing so, we will be able to live a life that is pleasing to God, and that is what every Christian desires.

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (John 14:15) This is a promise that God has given us. If we obey His Word, He will reward us with eternal life. That is why it is so important to study the Word of God regularly, and to let it guide our lives. By doing so, we will be able to live a life that is pleasing to God, and that is what every Christian desires.