

OCTOBER 15, 2015

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 6

Do You See God's
Hand in Your Life?

PAGE 4

DECEMBER 7-13

"Give Us More
Faith"

PAGE 9

DECEMBER 14-20

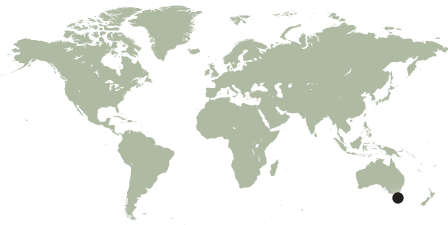
Serve Jehovah
Without Distraction

PAGE 18

DECEMBER 21-27

Keep Meditating
on Spiritual Things

PAGE 23



TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

COVER: A brother conducts a meeting for field service in the small coastal town of St. Helens, Tasmania

POPULATION

514,800

CONGREGATIONS

24

PUBLISHERS

1,779

RATIO

1:289

STUDY ARTICLES

- **Do You See God's Hand in Your Life?**
- **"Give Us More Faith"**

In the first article, we learn how to perceive God's interest and his hand in our life and how to avoid the mistakes of those who fail to do so. The second article discusses the importance of faith for salvation and how we can strengthen our faith and put it into action.—Heb. 11:6.

- **Serve Jehovah Without Distraction**
- **Keep Meditating on Spiritual Things**

We live in what has been called the age of distraction. What can we do to avoid needless distractions so that we can keep focusing our attention on the spiritual side of our life? To that end, as we read God's Word, how can we make sure that our study is productive? These articles will explain.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 "Keep Holding Men of That Sort Dear"
- 14 No Regrets About the Decision He Made in His Youth
- 28 Drawing Near to God Has Been Good for Me
- 30 "The Naive Person Believes Every Word"

THE **WATCHTOWER**[®]
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, and by Watch Tower Bible and

Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2015 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

October 15, 2015

Vol. 136, No. 20 Semimonthly ENGLISH



“Keep Holding Men of That Sort Dear”

SINCE 1992, the Governing Body has appointed experienced, mature Christian elders to help its committees carry out their work.* These helpers, from among the “other sheep,” provide valuable support to the Governing Body. (John 10:16) They attend the weekly meeting of the committee to which they are assigned, providing background information and offering suggestions. The Governing Body members make the final decisions, but the helpers implement the committee’s direction and carry out whatever assignments they are given. The helpers accompany Governing Body members to special and interna-

* See page 131 of the book *God’s Kingdom Rules!* for a summary of the responsibilities that are cared for by the six committees of the Governing Body.

tional conventions. They may also be assigned to visit branch offices as headquarters representatives.

One of the helpers who has served since the arrangement was instituted says: “When I take care of my assigned tasks, the Governing Body can concentrate more fully on spiritual matters.” Looking back over his two decades of serving as a helper, another brother observes: “It has been a privilege beyond anything I could ever have anticipated.”

The Governing Body entrusts much to its helpers and appreciates the fine service performed by these loyal, hardworking brothers. May we all “keep holding men of that sort dear.” —Phil. 2:29.

Helpers to Governing Body Committees



Coordinators’ Committee

John Ekrann
Robert Wallen



Personnel Committee

Gerald Grizzle
Patrick LaFranca
Daniel Molchan
Ralph Walls



Publishing Committee

Don Adams
Robert Butler
Harold Corkern
Donald Gordon
Robert Luccioni
Alex Reinmueller
David Sinclair



Service Committee

Gary Breaux
Joel Dellinger
Seth Hyatt
Christopher Mavor
Baltasar Perla, Jr.
William Turner, Jr.
Robert Wallen
Leon Weaver, Jr.



Teaching Committee

Ronald Curzan
Kenneth Flodin
William Malenfant
Mark Noumair
David Schafer



Writing Committee

Robert Ciranko
James Mantz
Izak Marais
Gene Smalley
John Wischuk



Do You See God's Hand in Your Life?

“The hand of Jehovah will become known to his servants.”

—ISA. 66:14.

SONGS: 65, 26

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

Why do some people see God's hand in their life, whereas others do not?

What evidence do we have of Jehovah's interest in us today?

What can we do to see God's hand in our life more clearly?

MANY people think that there is little connection between what they are doing and what God is doing. In fact, some believe that God has little interest in what is happening to humans. After Super Typhoon Haiyan wreaked destruction on the central Philippines in November 2013, the mayor of one large city said: “God must have been somewhere else.”

² Other people act as if God cannot see what they are doing. (Isa. 26:10, 11; 3 John 11) They are like those whom the apostle Paul described when he said: “They did not see fit to acknowledge God.” Such people “were filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, and badness.”—Rom. 1:28, 29.

³ What about us? Unlike those mentioned above, we realize that Jehovah observes everything we do. But do we also perceive his interest and supporting hand in our life? Moreover, are we among those whom Jesus referred to as ones who “will see God”? (Matt. 5:8) To learn what that means, let

1, 2. What do some people think about God?

3. (a) What questions may we want to ask ourselves about God?
(b) As used in the Bible, what does Jehovah's “hand” often refer to?

us first take a look at Bible examples of those who saw God's hand in action and of those who refused to do so. Then we will learn how we can clearly see Jehovah's hand in our life through our eyes of faith. As we consider these points, keep in mind that the Bible often speaks of God's "hand" when referring to his applied power, which he uses to help his servants and to defeat his opposers.

—**Read Deuteronomy 26:8.**

THEY FAILED TO SEE GOD'S HAND

⁴ In Israel's early history, people had the opportunity to see and hear about how God acted in Israel's behalf. Jehovah miraculously delivered his people out of Egypt, and then king after king fell before them. (Josh. 9:3, 9, 10) Despite what almost all the kings on the west side of the Jordan heard and saw, "they formed an alliance to fight against Joshua and Israel." (Josh. 9:1, 2) Even after those kings started to fight, they had every reason to see God's hand. At Jehovah's direction, "the sun stood still and the moon did not move until the nation could take vengeance on its enemies." (Josh. 10:13) But Jehovah "allowed their [the opponents'] hearts to become stubborn so that they waged war against Israel." (Josh. 11:20) Israel's opponents refused to acknowledge that God was fighting for Israel, and that led to their defeat.

⁵ Later, wicked King Ahab had every opportunity to see God's hand in events. Elijah told him: "There will be no dew or rain except by my word!"

4. Why did Israel's opponents fail to see God's hand?

5. What did wicked King Ahab refuse to acknowledge?

(1 Ki. 17:1) Jehovah was obviously behind those words, but Ahab refused to accept the evidence. Later, Ahab saw fire come down from heaven when Elijah prayed for his offering to be consumed. Elijah then indicated that Jehovah would bring the drought to an end, telling Ahab: "Go down so that the downpour may not detain you!" (1 Ki. 18:22-45) Ahab saw all of this happen but still refused to acknowledge that it was a mighty display of God's power. This and the preceding examples teach us an important lesson—we must recognize Jehovah's hand when it is in action.

THEY SAW JEHOVAH'S HAND

⁶ In contrast with those wicked kings, others saw God's hand, even though they were in the same situation as those mentioned above. For example, unlike most of the nations who fought against Israel in Joshua's time, the Gibeonites made peace with Israel. Why? They said: "Your servants have come . . . out of regard for the name of Jehovah your God, because we have heard about his fame and about all he did." (Josh. 9:3, 9, 10) They wisely recognized Israel's backer to be the true God.

⁷ Rahab too perceived God's hand in the events of her day. After learning about how Jehovah rescued his people, she told two Israelite spies: "I do know that Jehovah will give you the land." Even though taking such a stand was fraught with danger, she expressed faith that Jehovah could deliver her and her family.—Josh. 2:9-13; 4:23, 24.

6, 7. What did some in Joshua's time clearly perceive?

⁸ Unlike Israel's wicked King Ahab, some Israelites who witnessed Jehovah's response to Elijah's fire test recognized God's hand in matters. When they saw the fire from Jehovah consume the offering, they exclaimed: "Jehovah is the true God!" (1 Ki. 18:39) To them, that was an obvious conclusion!

⁹ Both the positive and the negative examples we have considered help us to understand what it means to see God or to see his hand in matters. As we come to know him, we too can see his hand because we perceive his qualities and actions with "the eyes of [our] heart." (Eph. 1:18) Surely we want to be like those past and present who have clearly seen Jehovah supporting his people. Nonetheless, do we really have evidence that God is active in people's lives today?

EVIDENCE OF GOD'S HAND TODAY

¹⁰ We have ample reason to believe that Jehovah continues to help people. Time and again, we have heard experiences of how individuals prayed for spiritual help and then received it. (Ps. 53:2) While preaching from house to house on a small island in the Philippines, Allan met a woman who started to cry. He states: "Just that morning, she prayed to Jehovah that his Witnesses would find her. As a teenager, she had studied the Bible with the Witnesses but had lost contact with them when she got married and moved to that island. God

8. How did some Israelites recognize God's hand?

9. How can we see Jehovah and his hand today?

10. What evidence do we have that Jehovah is helping people today? (See opening image.)

answered her prayer so quickly that she was visibly moved." Within a year, she dedicated her life to Jehovah.

¹¹ Many of God's servants have seen evidence of his help when they broke free from such addictive habits as smoking, drug abuse, or the viewing of pornography. Some say that they repeatedly tried to stop on their own but were not successful. However, when they turned to Jehovah for help, he supplied "the power beyond what is normal," and they finally conquered their weakness. —2 Cor. 4:7; Ps. 37:23, 24.

¹² Jehovah has helped many of his servants cope with personal challenges. For example, Amy struggled when she was assigned to help build a Kingdom Hall and missionary home on a small Pacific island. She says: "We stayed in a small hotel, and every day we walked through flooded streets to the work site." She also had to adjust to local customs, and frequently there was no electricity or water. Amy adds: "To make matters worse, I lashed out at one of the sisters working with us. I went home feeling like a failure. In my dark hotel room, I poured my heart out to Jehovah, asking for help." When the electricity came back on, Amy picked up a *Watchtower* magazine with an article on a Gilead graduation program that discussed all the things she was struggling with: new culture, homesickness, new people to get along with. She says: "I felt that Jehovah was speaking to me that night. It gave me the motivation to continue in my assignment."—Ps. 44:25, 26; Isa. 41:10, 13.

11, 12. (a) In what ways is Jehovah helping his servants? (b) Relate an experience of someone who received God's help.



**Breaking free from
addictive habits**



**Simplifying
your lifestyle**



**Winning
legal victories**

Do you see evidence that Jehovah is helping his people today?
(See paragraphs 11-13)

¹³ The fact that Jehovah's Witnesses have been successful in "defending and legally establishing" the good news is another proof of support from Jehovah's mighty hand. (Phil. 1:7) Some governments have tried to stop the work of God's people completely. But when we look back and see that Jehovah's Witnesses have received at least 268 high-court victories, including 24 cases won in the European Court of Human Rights just since the year 2000, it becomes clear that no one can hold back God's hand.—Isa. 54:17; **read Isaiah 59:1.**

¹⁴ The preaching of the good news worldwide is accomplished only with God's help. (Matt. 24:14; Acts 1:8) Add to that the unified, multinational brotherhood of Jehovah's peo-

13. What proof do we have that Jehovah supports his people in "defending and legally establishing" the good news?

14. How do we see God's hand in our preaching work and in the unity that we enjoy?

ple today—something the world cannot imitate—and we can see why even outsiders admit: "God is really among you." (1 Cor. 14:25) So as a whole, we have abundant proof that God is working in behalf of his people. (**Read Isaiah 66:14.**) However, what about you personally? Do you clearly see Jehovah's hand in your life?

DO YOU SEE JEHOVAH'S HAND IN YOUR LIFE?

¹⁵ What are some reasons why we may not clearly see God's hand in our affairs? Life's challenges can overwhelm us. When this happens, we may forget to keep focused on how Jehovah has already helped us. When Queen Jezebel threatened the prophet Elijah's life, even Elijah momentarily forgot how God had acted in his behalf. Regarding Elijah, the Bible says: "He asked that he

15. Explain why we at times may not clearly see Jehovah's hand in our life.

might die.” (1 Ki. 19:1-4) What was the solution to Elijah’s problem? He needed to look to Jehovah for encouragement. —1 Ki. 19:14-18.

¹⁶ Job got so distracted by his own concerns that he neglected to see things from God’s viewpoint. (Job 42:3-6) Like Job, we too may need to put forth greater effort to see God. How can we do that? In the light of the Scriptures, we need to meditate on what is happening around us. As we become aware of how Jehovah supports us, he will become more real to us. Then, like Job, we can say: “My ears have heard about you, but now I do see you with my eyes.”

¹⁷ How might we see Jehovah’s hand?

16. What can we do to see God as Job did?

17, 18. (a) In what ways might we discern that Jehovah is helping us? (b) Relate an experience that demonstrates how God is helping us today.

Is Jehovah using you to help others see him?
(See paragraphs 17, 18)



Here are some examples: Perhaps you feel that the way you received the truth was clearly at God’s direction. Have you ever attended Christian meetings, heard a part, and said: “That was just what I needed”? Or you may have experienced an answer to a prayer. Maybe you decided to expand your ministry and were amazed at how Jehovah helped to work things out for you. Or have you ever experienced leaving a job for spiritual reasons and then seen the truth of God’s promise: “I will never abandon you”? (Heb. 13:5) By being spiritually alert, we can discern how Jehovah has helped us in many ways.

¹⁸ Sarah from Kenya relates this experience: “I prayed about a student who I felt did not appreciate her Bible study. I asked Jehovah if I should stop the study. Immediately after I said ‘Amen,’ my phone rang. The Bible student called to ask if she could attend the meeting with me! I was awestruck!” By being alert, you too may see ways that God is active in your life. Rhonna, a sister who lives in Asia, says: “It takes some experience to discern Jehovah’s guidance. But once you do, it’s amazing to discover how much interest he has in us!”

¹⁹ Jesus said: “Happy are the pure in heart, since they will see God.” (Matt. 5:8) How can we be “pure in heart”? We must be clean on the inside and stop any wrong conduct. **(Read 2 Corinthians 4:2.)** As we cultivate stronger spirituality and manifest upright conduct, we put ourselves among those who can see God. The next article will examine what can help us to perceive Jehovah’s influence even more clearly in our life—our faith.

19. What more is needed to be among those who see God?



“Give Us More Faith”

“Help me out where I need faith!”—MARK 9:24.

HAVE you ever thought, ‘Am I the kind of person Jehovah will want to save during the great tribulation and bring into the new world?’ Of course, surviving involves several factors, but one very important requirement is highlighted by the apostle Paul: “Without faith it is impossible to please God well.” (Heb. 11:6) This may sound very basic, but the truth is that “faith is not a possession of all people.” (2 Thess. 3:2) These texts help us understand how important it is to cultivate strong faith.

² The apostle Peter drew special attention to the importance of faith when he spoke of its “tested quality” that “may be found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (**Read 1 Peter 1:7.**) Since the great tribulation is fast approaching, do we not want to make sure that we have the type of faith that puts us among those who are a cause for praise when our glorious King is revealed? Most certainly, we want to be “the sort who have faith for the preserving of our lives.” (Heb. 10:39) With this goal in mind, we may plead like the man who said: “Help me out where I need faith!” (Mark 9:24) Or we may be moved to say, as did

1. How important is faith? (See opening image.)
- 2, 3. (a) What do we learn from Peter about the importance of faith?
(b) What questions will we now consider?

SONGS: 81, 135

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why is strengthening our faith so important?

What steps can we take to build faith?

How can we demonstrate that we have a living faith?

Jesus' apostles: "Give us more faith."
—Luke 17:5.

³ The need for more faith raises some questions. How can we build this quality? How can we show that we have faith? What assurance do we have that our requests for more faith will be answered?

BUILDING FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD

⁴ Since "all the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction," we can learn from the many examples of faith recorded in the Bible. (Rom. 15:4) When we read about such people as Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, and many others, these accounts may move us to examine our own faith. (Heb. 11:32-35) In addition, when we read modern-day accounts of brothers and sisters with outstanding faith, this can move us to work hard to strengthen our faith.*

⁵ An example from the Bible is the prophet Elijah. Imagine the following scenes that reveal his implicit trust in Jehovah. When Elijah informed King Ahab of Jehovah's intention to bring about a drought, he confidently declared: "As surely as Jehovah . . . is living, . . . there will be no dew or rain except by my word!" (1 Ki. 17:1) Elijah believed that Jehovah would supply what was needed for him and for others during the drought. (1 Ki. 17:4, 5, 13, 14) He ex-

* For some examples, see the life stories of Lillian Gobitas Klose (July 22, 1993, *Awake!*), Feliks Borys (February 22, 1994, *Awake!*), and Josephine Elias (September 2009 *Awake!*).

4. Whose examples can move us to strengthen our faith?

5. How did Elijah show that he had strong faith in Jehovah, and what does his example move us to think about?

pressed confidence that Jehovah could raise a child from the dead. (1 Ki. 17:21) He had no doubt that Jehovah would send fire to consume his sacrifice on Mount Carmel. (1 Ki. 18:24, 37) When Jehovah's time came to end the drought, even before there was any sign of rain, Elijah told Ahab: "Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy down-pour." (1 Ki. 18:41) Do not such accounts make us examine ourselves to see if our faith is that strong?

WHAT CAN WE DO TO BUILD FAITH?

⁶ We cannot develop faith simply by our own willpower. Faith is an aspect of the fruitage of God's holy spirit. (Gal. 5:22) Thus, we are wise to follow Jesus' counsel about praying for more of that spirit because Jesus assures us that the Father will "give holy spirit to those asking him."—Luke 11:13.

⁷ Once our faith is established, we must continue to nourish it. Our faith might be compared to a wood fire. When the fire is started, it may come roaring to life in an intense blaze. However, if nothing more is done to the fire, it will eventually die down to hot coals that, in turn, will become cold ashes if left alone. But if you regularly feed the fire with more wood, it can be kept going indefinitely. So, too, our faith can be kept alive if we regularly feed on God's Word. By progressively studying the Bible, we can develop a deep love for it and its Author, and that will become the basis for building more faith.

⁸ What more can you do to build and

6. What is needed from Jehovah to build faith?

7. Illustrate how we can keep our faith strong.

8. What will help us to build and maintain our faith?

maintain strong faith? Do not be satisfied with only what you learned up to the point of your baptism. (Heb. 6:1, 2) Take note of fulfilled prophecies in the Bible because these can provide you with powerful reasons for having faith. You can also use God's Word as a measuring rod to see if your faith matches the description of what is expected of those who have strong faith.—**Read James 1:25; 2:24, 26.**

⁹ The apostle Paul told fellow Christians that they could “have an interchange of encouragement by one another's faith.” (Rom. 1:12) As we associate with fellow worshippers, we can build up one another's faith, especially when we are with those who have already demonstrated the “tested quality” of their faith. (Jas. 1:3) Bad associations destroy faith, but good associations build it. (1 Cor. 15:33) That is one reason why we are counseled not to forsake “our meeting together,” but to keep on “encouraging one another.” (**Read Hebrews 10:24, 25.**) Another reason is that the content of the meetings themselves provides us with faith-building instruction. This is in harmony with Paul's statement: “Faith follows the thing heard.” (Rom. 10:17) Are we making association at Christian meetings a regular part of our life?

¹⁰ When we share in the field ministry, not only do we build faith in others but our own faith grows. Like the early Christians, we learn to put full faith in Jehovah and speak boldly in any situation.—Acts 4:17-20; 13:46.

9, 10. How do the following help build faith: (a) good association? (b) congregation meetings? (c) field service?

¹¹ As we sense how Jehovah helps us in life and how he answers our prayers, our faith grows. This was true of Caleb and Joshua. They showed faith in Jehovah when they spied out the Promised Land. However, as they saw Jehovah's direction at each turn in their life thereafter, their faith grew even more. No wonder Joshua spoke so strongly to the Israelites, saying: “Not one word out of all the good promises that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed.” He later added: “Therefore, fear Jehovah and serve him with integrity and faithfulness . . . As for me and my household, we will serve Jehovah.” (Josh. 23:14; 24:14, 15) As we taste Jehovah's goodness, we too can develop such conviction.—Ps. 34:8.

DEMONSTRATING OUR FAITH

¹² How do we demonstrate that we have living faith? The disciple James answers that question by saying: “I will show you my faith by my works.” (Jas. 2:18) Our actions will show that we have real faith. Let us look at some examples.

¹³ Sharing in the preaching work is an excellent way to demonstrate our faith. Why is that? This work requires that we have faith in God's timing of the coming end of this system of things, believing that “it will not be late!” (Hab. 2:3) One way to measure our faith is to look at the extent to which we are willing to expend ourselves in the ministry. Are we doing all we can, perhaps even seeking ways to expand our share in the work? (2 Cor.

11. Why did Caleb and Joshua have strong faith, and how can we be like them?

12. What does James show is necessary regarding faith?

13. In what ways is the preaching work a means to show faith?



Those who expend themselves in the ministry give evidence of their strong faith
(See paragraph 13)

13:5) Yes, making “public declaration for salvation” is a powerful way to show that we have faith in our heart.—**Read Romans 10:10.**

¹⁴ We can also show faith as we grapple with the challenges of daily life. Whether we face illness, discouragement, depression, poverty, or other trying problems, we have confidence that Jehovah and his Son will “help us at the right time.” (Heb. 4:16) We show such confidence by praying for help that is not limited to our spiritual needs. Jesus said that we can pray for material things, including “bread according to our daily needs.” (Luke 11:3) Bible accounts convince us that Jehovah can provide for us. During a severe drought in Israel, Jehovah provided Elijah with food and water. “The ravens were bringing him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from

the stream,” as Jehovah had directed. (1 Ki. 17:3-6) We have faith that Jehovah can maneuver matters so that we too have what we need.

¹⁵ We have confidence that applying Bible principles can help us put food on the table. Rebecca, a married sister in Asia, found this to be true of her family. They have applied Matthew 6:33 and Proverbs 10:4 in their life by putting Kingdom interests first and by being diligent workers. Rebecca says that at one point her husband felt that the nature and pressure of his secular work might endanger their spirituality, so he resigned. However, they had four children to support. Rebecca tells what happened: “We began making confections and selling them. Over the years that we made a living this way, we felt that Jehovah never abandoned us. We never missed a single meal.” Have you too been able to demonstrate your belief that the Bible provides the best guidance available to people today?

14, 15. (a) How can we show faith in our daily lives? (b) Relate an experience to illustrate strong faith in action.

¹⁶ We must never doubt that if we follow God’s direction, it will turn out for our good. Paul, quoting the inspired words of Habakkuk, wrote: “The righteous one will live by reason of faith.” (Gal. 3:11; Hab. 2:4) Therefore, it is vital that we put faith in the One who can really help. Paul reminds us that God is “the one who can, according to his power that is operating in us, do more than superabundantly beyond all the things we ask or conceive.” (Eph. 3:20) Jehovah’s servants do all they can to carry out the will of God, but knowing their limitations, they trust in Jehovah to bless the outcome. Are we not glad that our God is with us?

REQUESTS FOR FAITH ANSWERED

¹⁷ After the foregoing discussion, we

16. What will be the end result if we trust in God?

17. (a) How was the apostles’ request for faith answered? (b) Why can we expect that our request for more faith will be answered?

may feel as the apostles did when they said to the Lord: “Give us more faith.” (Luke 17:5) Their request was answered, particularly at Pentecost 33 C.E. when holy spirit was poured out on them and they were given deeper insight into God’s purpose. This strengthened their faith. As a result, they embarked on the greatest preaching campaign up to that time. (Col. 1:23) Can we expect our requests for more faith to be answered? The Bible assures us that we can when “we ask according to [God’s] will.”—1 John 5:14.

¹⁸ Clearly, Jehovah is pleased with those who put their complete trust in him. Jehovah will answer our request for more faith, and our faith will grow exceedingly, leading to our being “counted worthy of the Kingdom of God.”—2 Thess. 1:3, 5.

18. How does Jehovah bless those who cultivate faith?

We show faith as we grapple with the challenges of daily life
(See paragraph 14)



No Regrets About the Decision He Made in His Youth



AS TOLD BY
ILVE APANYUK

DURING the last years of his life, my great-uncle Nikolai Dubovinsky compiled a record of his experiences—both joyful and anxious—in a life of dedicated service to Jehovah, much of it during the ban in the former Soviet Union. Despite challenges and difficulties, he always remained faithful and had an extraordinary zest for life. Uncle Nikolai often said that he wanted young people to hear his story, so I would like to share some highlights from it. He was born in 1926 to a peasant family in the village of Podvirivka, located in the Chernivtsi Oblast, Ukraine.

NIKOLAI TELLS HOW HE FOUND THE TRUTH

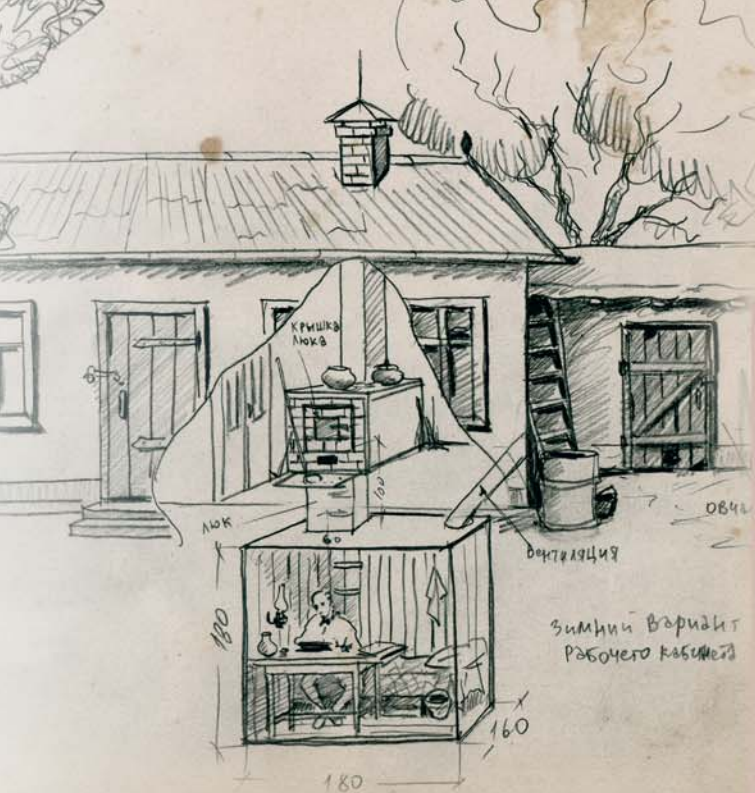
Uncle Nikolai begins: “One day in 1941, my older brother Ivan brought home the books *The Harp of God* and *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, some *Watchtower* magazines, and several booklets. I read them all. I was surprised to learn that the Devil, not God, is the source of all the trouble in the world. Along with the publications, I read the Gospels and realized that I had found the truth.

I enthusiastically shared my Kingdom hope with others. As I studied these publications, I grew in understanding of the truth and developed a strong desire to become a servant of Jehovah.

“I understood that I would suffer because of my beliefs. It was wartime, and I was not about to kill anyone. To prepare myself for the tests ahead, I started to memorize such Bible verses as Matthew 10:28 and 26:52. I firmly resolved that I would always remain faithful to Jehovah, even if it meant my death!

“I turned 18 in 1944 and was called up for military service. This was the very first time I found myself among fellow believers, other young brothers of draft age who had also gathered at the conscription point. We resolutely told the authorities that we would not participate in the war. Enraged, the military personnel threatened to starve us, force us to dig trenches, or just shoot us. Fearlessly, we answered: ‘We are in your hands. But no matter what you do to us, we will not break God’s command, “You must not murder.”’—Ex. 20:13.

“As it turned out, two other brothers and I were sent to Belarus to work in the fields and repair damaged houses. I still remember seeing the gruesome effects of war on the outskirts of Minsk. Charred trees lined the road. Unburied corpses and the bloated bodies of dead horses lay in the ditches and forest. I saw abandoned wagons and artillery and even the wreckage of an



Sketches of a secret bunker under the house where Nikolai duplicated literature



airplane. Here in front of my eyes were the consequences of breaking God's commands.

"The war ended in 1945, but we were still sentenced to ten years in prison for refusing to fight. For the first three years, we had no association or published spiritual food. We were able to contact some sisters by letter, but they too were arrested and sentenced to 25 years in a labor camp.

"Then we received an early release in 1950 and returned home. While I was in prison, my mother and younger sister Maria had become Jehovah's Witnesses! My older brothers were not yet Witnesses, but they were studying the Bible. Because I was actively preaching, the Soviet security agency wanted to send me to prison again. Then the brothers in charge of the work

asked me to assist in producing literature underground. I was 24 years old."

PREPARING LITERATURE

"The Witnesses were fond of saying, 'If the Kingdom work is banned above ground, it will continue underground.' (Prov. 28: 28) At this time, most of our printing was done in secret underground locations. My first 'workroom' was in a bunker on the property where my older brother Dmitry lived. Sometimes I did not leave the bunker for two weeks straight. If the kerosene lamp went out because of a lack of oxygen, I would lie down and wait until the room filled with fresh air.

"One day, a brother with whom I worked asked me, 'Nikolai, have you been baptized?' Although I had served Jehovah for



At the labor camp in Mordvinia, 1963

11 years, I had not been baptized. So he discussed the matter with me, and that night, at the age of 26, I got baptized in a lake. Three years later, I received additional responsibility, becoming a member of the Country Committee. At that time, brothers who were still free were appointed to replace those who had been arrested, and the Kingdom work continued.”

THE DIFFICULTIES OF WORKING UNDERGROUND

“The underground printing work was much more difficult than prison! For seven years, to avoid surveillance by the KGB, I was unable to attend congregation meetings and had to look after my own spirituality. I saw my family only when I went to visit them, which was seldom. Still, they understood my situation, and this encouraged me. The constant stress and need to be cau-

“We always put in an honest day’s work and often did more than we were assigned to do”

tious sapped my strength. We had to be ready for anything. For example, one evening two police officers came to the house where I was staying. I jumped out of a window on the other side of the house and ran into the forest. Emerging into a field, I heard strange whistling sounds. When I heard gunshots, I realized that the whistling was from bullets! One of my pursuers jumped on a horse and kept shooting at me from horseback until he ran out of ammunition. One shot hit me in the arm. Finally, after a three-mile (5 km) chase, I escaped by hiding in the forest. Later at my trial, I was told that they had fired at me 32 times!

“Since I spent so much time underground, I was very pale. This immediately gave away what I was doing. So I spent as much time as I could in the sun. Life underground also affected my health. One time I could not even attend an important meeting with other brothers because I was bleeding from my nose and mouth.”

NIKOLAI’S ARREST

“On January 26, 1957, I was arrested. Six months later the Supreme Court of Ukraine announced the verdict. I was sentenced to death by firing squad, but because the death penalty had been abolished in the country, my sentence was commuted

to 25 years in prison. Eight of us were sentenced to a total of 130 years in labor camps. We were sent to camps in Mordvinia, where there were about 500 Witnesses. We met secretly in small groups to study *The Watchtower*. After examining some of our confiscated magazines, one guard exclaimed: 'If you continue to read them, you will be invincible!' We always put in an honest day's work and often did more than we were assigned to do. Still, the camp commander lamented: 'The work you do here is not important to us. What we need is your loyalty and allegiance.'"

HIS INTEGRITY DID NOT FADE

After being released from the labor camp in 1967, Uncle Nikolai helped organize congregations in Estonia and St. Petersburg, Russia. Early in 1991, the 1957 court verdict was overturned because of the lack of evidence that a crime had been committed. During that time, many Witnesses who had

suffered under the harsh treatment of the authorities were exonerated. In 1996, Nikolai moved to the city of Velikiye Luki in Pskov Oblast, about 300 miles (500 km) from St. Petersburg. He bought a small house, and in 2003 a Kingdom Hall was constructed on his property. Today, two flourishing congregations meet there.

My husband and I serve at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia. In March 2011, just a few months before his death, Uncle Nikolai visited us for the last time. His words deeply touched us as he told us with a sparkle in his eye: "From all appearances, I can see that in a manner of speaking, the seventh day of marching around Jericho has begun." (Josh. 6:15) He was 85 years old. Although his life had not been easy, he described it in these words: "How happy I am that when I was young, I decided to serve Jehovah! I have never regretted it!"



Kingdom Hall in Velikiye Luki

Nikolai Dubovinsky
in 2011





Serve Jehovah Without Distraction

*“Mary . . . kept listening to what [Jesus] was saying.
Martha . . . was distracted with attending to many duties.”*

—LUKE 10:39, 40.

SONGS: 94, 134

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How did both Martha and Mary set a fine example for us?

What does it mean to make use of the world but not to the full?

How are many following the examples of Jesus and Paul in serving God without distraction?

WHAT comes to mind when you think about the Bible character Martha? Although she was the only woman mentioned *by name* as being one whom Jesus loved, he also had pure unselfish love for other godly women, such as his dear earthly mother, Mary, and Martha’s sister, Mary. (John 11:5; 19:25-27) Why, then, is Martha mentioned in this way in the Gospel account?

² Jesus loved Martha not only for her hospitable and industrious nature but, no doubt, because of her spirituality. She was a woman who truly believed Jesus’ teachings. Martha had remarkable faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah. (John 11:21-27) At the same time, like all of us, she was not perfect. On one occasion while Jesus was being entertained in her home, Martha presumed to tell Jesus what he should do to correct a situation she thought to be wrong. “Lord,” said Martha, “does it not matter to you that my sister has left me alone

1, 2. Why did Jesus love Martha, but what shows that she was not perfect?

to attend to things? Tell her to come and help me.” (**Read Luke 10:38-42.**) What lesson can we learn from this account?

MARTHA WAS DISTRACTED

³ In response to their hospitality, Jesus is moved to give Martha and Mary a spiritual gift. Mary seizes the opportunity to take in knowledge from the mouth of the Great Teacher and sits down “at the feet of the Lord . . . , listening to what he was saying.” Martha could have done the same. No doubt, Jesus would have commended Martha for giving him her full attention.

⁴ However, Martha gets busy preparing a special meal and does other chores to make Jesus’ stay as nice as possible. But all this work is causing her needless anxiety, and she becomes irritated with Mary. Jesus notices that Martha is trying to do too much, so he kindly says: “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and disturbed about many things.” He then suggests that just one dish of food would be sufficient. Jesus now turns his attention to Mary and clears her of any negligence, saying: “For her part, Mary chose the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her.” Mary may soon have forgotten what she ate on that special occasion, but she would never forget the commendation and fine spiritual food she received by giving Jesus her undivided attention. More than 60 years later, the apostle John wrote: “Jesus loved Martha and her sister.” (John 11:5) These inspired words surely indicate that Martha took to heart Jesus’ loving correction and that she strove to

serve Jehovah faithfully for the rest of her life.

⁵ Concerning distractions, how does the world we live in compare with the world of Bible times? “Never in history has mankind boasted superior means of communication, high speed printing presses, profusely illustrated magazines, the radio, movies, television. . . . They bombard us daily with fresh distractions Not too long ago, it was fondly thought that ours was ‘The Age of Enlightenment.’ More and more it is becoming ‘The Age of Distraction.’” These words were spoken to a group of students in the United States over 60 years ago. “Distractions,” said *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1958, “will likely increase as this world nears its doom.” How true! And this raises an important question: What can we do to avoid needless distractions and become more like Mary, keeping our focus on spiritual things?

USING THE WORLD BUT NOT TO THE FULL

⁶ For the advancement of true worship, the earthly part of God’s organization has always made good use of the world’s technology. For example, consider the “Photo-Drama of Creation,” a photographic slide and motion picture production, complete with color and sound. Before and during World War I, millions throughout the world received comfort from this presentation, which concluded by describing the coming,

5. How does life in this modern world compare with life in Bible times, and what question does this raise?

6. How have Jehovah’s people made good use of the world’s technology?

3, 4. In what way did Mary choose “the good portion,” and what lesson did Martha no doubt take to heart? (See opening image.)



Do not allow nonessential things to interfere with spiritual activities
(See paragraph 7)

peaceful Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ. Later, the Kingdom message was broadcast over public radio and was heard by millions more throughout the earth. Today, computer technology and the Internet are being used in a powerful way to spread the good news, reaching people on remote islands and in every corner of the earth.

⁷ As the Bible warns, there is a danger in making too much use of what the world has to offer. **(Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.)** A Christian can easily waste an excessive amount of time on things that are not wrong in themselves, such as hobbies, recreational reading, TV watching, sightseeing, window shopping, and seeking out the latest electronic gadgets or luxuries. Social networking, texting, circulating e-mails, and frequently checking the latest news and sports events can also waste our time and can even become an obsession.* (Eccl. 3: 1, 6) If we do not limit the amount of

* See the article “The Naive Person Believes Every Word.”

7. (a) Why is it dangerous to make too much use of the world? (b) What should be of special concern to us? (See footnote.)

time we spend on nonessential things, we may find ourselves neglecting the most important activity of all—our worship of Jehovah.—**Read Ephesians 5: 15-17.**

⁸ Satan has designed his world to attract and distract us. That was true in the first century, and it is even more so today. (2 Tim. 4:10) Thus, we need to heed the counsel: “Do not love . . . the things in the world.” By constantly adjusting ourselves to live in accord with such counsel, we will avoid being distracted and we will be able to grow in our “love of the Father.” This, in turn, will make it easier for us to do the will of God and remain in his favor forever.—1 John 2: 15-17.

KEEP YOUR EYE FOCUSED

⁹ Jesus’ kind words of counsel to Martha were in perfect harmony with his teaching and his example. He encouraged his disciples to keep their figurative eye “focused” so as to pursue

8. Why is the counsel not to be loving the things in the world so important?

9. What did Jesus say about our figurative eye, and how did he set the example?

Kingdom interests without distraction. **(Read Matthew 6:22, 33.)** Jesus was not burdened with material possessions; he did not own a house or land.—Luke 9:58; 19:33-35.

¹⁰ Many things happened during Jesus' ministry that could have distracted him, but he never succumbed to them. Early in his ministry, after he had taught the crowds and performed miracles in Capernaum, people begged him not to leave their city. But how did Jesus react to this flattering request? He said: "I must also declare the good news of the Kingdom of God to other cities, because for this I was sent." (Luke 4:42-44) True to his word, Jesus walked the length and breadth of Palestine, preaching and teaching. Though perfect, he had normal human needs and sometimes felt very tired because of expending himself in God's service.—Luke 8:23; John 4:6.

¹¹ On a later occasion while Jesus was teaching his followers how to cope with opposition, a man interrupted, saying: "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But Jesus refused to be drawn into this dispute. "Man," he answered, "who appointed me judge or arbitrator between you two?" Then Jesus continued with his teaching, warning his listeners about the danger of being distracted from God's service by desires for material things.—Luke 12:13-15.

¹² The last week of Jesus' human life

10. What example did Jesus set early in his ministry?

11. What did Jesus say to a man who had a family dispute, and what warning did Jesus give?

12, 13. (a) Shortly before Jesus' death, what aroused the interest of some Greek proselytes? (b) How did Jesus handle the potential distraction?

was very stressful. (Matt. 26:38; John 12:27) He had much work to do, and he faced a humiliating trial and a cruel death. Consider, for example, what happened on Sunday, Nisan 9, of the year 33 C.E. As foretold, Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt, and the crowds hailed him as "the one coming as the King in Jehovah's name." (Luke 19:38) The next day, Jesus entered the temple and courageously threw out the greedy businessmen who were using God's house for extorting money from fellow Jews.—Luke 19:45, 46.

¹³ Among the crowds in Jerusalem were some Greek proselytes who evidently were so impressed with Jesus that they asked the apostle Philip to arrange a meeting with him. Jesus, however, refused to be distracted from the more important matters that lay ahead. He certainly did not want to try to gain popularity in order to avoid a sacrificial death at the hands of God's enemies. So after explaining that he would soon die, he said to Andrew and Philip: "Whoever is fond of his life destroys it, but whoever hates his life in this world will safeguard it for everlasting life." Rather than satisfy the curiosity of those Greeks, he recommended following his self-sacrificing course and promised: "If anyone would minister to me, the Father will honor him." No doubt, Philip carried this positive message back to the inquirers.—John 12:20-26.

¹⁴ Though Jesus refused to be distracted from his main purpose of preaching the good news, he was not always thinking about work. He accepted at least one invitation to a wedding and even

14. While Jesus put the preaching work first in his life, what shows that he was balanced?

contributed to the joy of the occasion by miraculously turning water into wine. (John 2:2, 6-10) He also accepted invitations to evening meals with close friends and potential disciples. (Luke 5:29; John 12:2) More important, Jesus frequently bought out time for prayer, private reflection, and needed rest.—Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:31, 32.

“THROW OFF EVERY WEIGHT”

¹⁵ “Let us also throw off every weight,” wrote the apostle Paul, who likened the course of a dedicated Christian to an endurance race. **(Read Hebrews 12:1.)** Paul certainly practiced what he preached, giving up a promising career in Judaism that could have brought him wealth and fame. He focused on “the more important things” and slaved in God’s service, traveling back and forth between Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Judea. “Forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead, I am pressing on toward the goal for the prize,” wrote Paul regarding his hope of everlasting life in heaven. (Phil. 1:10; 3:8, 13, 14) Taking full advantage of his singleness, Paul succeeded in being in “constant devotion to the Lord without distraction.” —1 Cor. 7:32-35.

¹⁶ Like Paul, some servants of God choose to remain single so that they have fewer family responsibilities and can devote themselves to Kingdom service. (Matt. 19:11, 12) Married servants of God often have more extensive family responsibilities. But whether single

15. What counsel did the apostle Paul give, and how did he set a fine example?

16, 17. Whether single or married, how can we follow the example Paul set as a disciple of Christ? Relate an experience.

or married, all can “throw off every weight” and serve God with as few distractions as possible. This may require cutting down on time-wasting habits and setting goals to increase the time spent in the service of God.

¹⁷ Consider a Welsh couple, Mark and Claire, each of whom entered the pioneer service after completing school and continued pioneering after they got married. “We were able to simplify our lives further by giving up our three-bedroom house and our part-time work so that we could enter the international construction work,” explains Mark. For the past 20 years, they have traveled throughout Africa, helping to build Kingdom Halls. Once, their personal funds dropped to 15 dollars, but Jehovah took care of them. “It gives us deep satisfaction,” says Claire, “to spend every day serving Jehovah. We have made so many friends along the way, and we lack nothing. The little that we have given up cannot be compared to the happiness that comes from serving Jehovah full-time.” Many full-time servants have had similar experiences.*

¹⁸ What about you? What can you do if you detect that you no longer pursue Kingdom interests with the same enthusiasm because of unnecessary distractions? Perhaps the answer lies in making your personal Bible reading and study more productive. How can you do that? The next article will explain.

* See also the life story of Hadyn and Melody Sanderson in the article “Knowing What Is Right and Doing It.” (*The Watchtower*, March 1, 2006) They gave up a profitable business in Australia to enter full-time service. Read what happened after they ran out of money while serving as missionaries in India.

18. What questions might some need to consider?



Keep Meditating on Spiritual Things

“Ponder over these things; be absorbed in them, so that your advancement may be plainly seen by all people.”—1 TIM. 4:15.

LANGUAGE enables humans to read, write, speak, understand the spoken word, pray, and sing praises to Jehovah. Each of these actions is astonishing and involves regions of the brain and neural networks that scientists still do not fully understand. Because our brain is unique, we are able to learn a language. “The ability of human children to acquire a language,” states a professor of linguistics, “is one of the hallmarks of [humans].”

² Man’s linguistic abilities are a miraculous gift designed by God. (Ps. 139:14; Rev. 4:11) Our God-given brain is unique in another important respect. Unlike animals, humans were created “in God’s image.” They have free will and can choose to use their linguistic skills to glorify God.—Gen. 1:27.

³ To all who desire to honor the Creator of language, God has given a wonderful gift, the Bible. It is available in whole or in part in some 2,600 languages. When you absorb these holy writings, you are filling your mind with the thoughts of God. (Ps. 40:5; 92:5; 139:17) Thus you can enjoy meditating

SONGS: 57, 52

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What does it mean to meditate?

What are some of the good things we can meditate on?

What are the benefits of daily meditating on God’s Word?

- 1, 2. In what important ways is the human brain unique?
3. What wonderful gift has Jehovah provided to make us wise?

on things that “are able to make you wise for salvation.”—**Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17.**

⁴ To meditate means to focus your thoughts and to reflect on or ponder over something, be it good or bad. (Ps. 77:12; Prov. 24:1, 2) The two best subjects for meditation are Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ. (John 17:3) We may wonder, though, what is the connection between reading and meditating? What opportunities are there for us to meditate, and how can we make meditation an enjoyable habit?

MAKE SURE THAT YOUR STUDY IS PRODUCTIVE

⁵ Amazing things can be done by your brain, sometimes even without your conscious effort. For example, breathing, walking, riding a bicycle, or touch-typing are automatic processes that you may be able to do without even thinking. To some extent, this is also true of reading. It is vital, therefore, to focus on the *meaning* of what you are reading. When getting to the end of a paragraph or before starting a new subheading in a publication, you might pause and ponder over what you have just read to be sure that you understand it correctly. Of course, distractions and a lack of concentration may cause your mind to wander, making your reading unproductive. How can this be avoided?

⁶ Scientific research shows that saying words *aloud* during study makes them easier to recall. The Creator of

our brain knows this. That is why he instructed Joshua to read His book of the Law “in an undertone.” (**Read Joshua 1:8.**) You will likely find that reading the Bible softly, or in an undertone, makes a deeper impression on your mind. This may also help you to concentrate better.

⁷ While reading may be done with little effort, meditation requires concentration. That is why the imperfect human brain is inclined to switch to easier, less demanding tasks. Thus, the best time to meditate is when you are rested and in a stress-free environment with few distractions. The psalmist found that a good time to meditate was while he was awake in bed during the night. (Ps. 63:6) Jesus, who had perfect mental powers, knew the advantage of being in quiet places to meditate and pray.—Luke 6:12.

GOOD THINGS TO MEDITATE ON

⁸ Reflecting on what you read in the Bible is one important way to meditate, but there are others. For example, as you view the marvels of creation, pause and think. This will no doubt move you to praise Jehovah for his goodness and—if you are with a companion—to share your appreciative feelings. (Ps. 104:24; Acts 14:17) Does Jehovah value such prayerful thoughts and expressions about him? Let his precious Word give the answer. Concerning these critical last days, we have this promise: “At that time those who fear Jehovah spoke with one another, each one with his

4. What does it mean to meditate, and what questions will we consider?

5, 6. When you read, what may help you to improve your understanding and your ability to remember what you read?

7. When is the best time to meditate on God’s Word? (See opening image.)

8. (a) Besides God’s Word, what can we meditate on? (b) How does Jehovah feel about the time we spend talking about him?



Do you meditate on the needs and circumstances of your Bible students?
(See paragraph 9)

companion, and Jehovah kept paying attention and listening. And a book of remembrance was written before him for those fearing Jehovah and for those *meditating* on his name.”—Mal. 3:16.

⁹ The apostle Paul told Timothy to “ponder over [or, “meditate on,” ftn.]” the effects of his speech, his conduct, and his teaching. **(Read 1 Timothy 4: 12-16.)** Like Timothy, we have an abundance of spiritual activities to think about. For example, we need time to meditate as we prepare to conduct a Bible study. With each student in mind, we might think of a viewpoint question or an illustration to help the student make progress. Time spent in this way can be most refreshing, as pondering over

9. (a) What did Paul tell Timothy to meditate on? (b) How can we apply Paul’s counsel when we prepare for our ministry?

these things strengthens our own faith and helps us to conduct our Bible studies with greater effectiveness and enthusiasm. The same is true when we prepare our heart to go out in the field service. **(Read Ezra 7:10.)** Reading a chapter from the Bible book of Acts will “stir up like a fire” our enthusiasm for the ministry. Meditating on Bible verses we intend to use that day and the publications we plan to offer will help us carry out our privilege of service. (2 Tim. 1:6) Think about the people in the territory and what may arouse their interest. All such preparation will move us to witness effectively “with a demonstration of spirit and power” from the Word of God.—1 Cor. 2:4.

¹⁰ Do you at times take notes during

10. What additional opportunities do we have to meditate on spiritual things?

public talks, assemblies, and conventions? Reviewing these notes provides excellent opportunities for meditation as you think about what you have learned from God's Word and from his organization. Also, each month's issues of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines and the latest convention releases give us fresh information that we can read and digest. When you read the *Yearbook*, you may find it helpful to pause before moving from one experience to another. That will give you time to reflect on what you read and to let the experience touch your heart. You may want to underline key thoughts or to make notes in the margin, which you might find helpful when preparing for a return visit, a shepherding call, or a future talk. Most important, pausing and meditating every now and then while reading Bible-based publications will give you the opportunity to absorb the material and to say a prayer of thanks to Jehovah for the good things you are learning.

DAILY MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

¹¹ Of course, the primary focus of our meditation should be God's inspired Word. Suppose you are in a circumstance where you are deprived of a Bible.* You will never be deprived of the ability to meditate on what you have stored in your memory, such as your favorite scriptures and the words of Kingdom songs. (Acts 16:25) And God's spirit can help bring back to your mind the

* See the article "Our Fight to Stay Spiritually Strong" in *The Watchtower*, December 1, 2006.

11. What should be the primary focus of our meditation, and why? (See also footnote.)

good things you have learned.—John 14:26.

¹² Some days of the week can be set aside to read and meditate on the weekly Bible reading for the Theocratic Ministry School. Other days can be set aside for meditating on what Jesus said and did. You will surely agree that among the better-known books of the Bible are the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pet. 2:21) God's people have even been provided with a publication that puts Jesus' experiences and time on earth in chronological order. It is a wonderful aid, especially if we carefully read and meditate on the parallel Gospel passages cited in each chapter.—John 14:6.

WHY IS MEDITATION SO IMPORTANT?

¹³ Meditating on spiritual things will help a person grow to Christian maturity. (Heb. 5:14; 6:1) A person who spends little time thinking about Jehovah and Jesus will not maintain strong faith. Such a person is in danger of drifting away or drawing away from the truth. (Heb. 2:1; 3:12) Jesus warned that if we do not hear, or accept, God's Word "with a fine and good heart," we will not "retain" it. Instead, we could easily be "carried away by anxieties, riches, and pleasures of this life, . . . and bring nothing to maturity."—Luke 8:14, 15.

¹⁴ Therefore, let us continue to ponder over God's Word. This will motivate us to reflect Jehovah's glory, qualities,

12. What routine of Bible reading can be beneficial?

13, 14. Why is it so important for us to keep meditating on spiritual things, and what will this motivate us to do?

and personality as revealed in the Bible. (2 Cor. 3:18) What more could we ask for? Growing in the knowledge of God and being allowed to reflect his glory are wonderful privileges, a never-ending process as we continue to learn how to imitate our loving heavenly Father.—Eccl. 3:11.

¹⁵ By continuing to ponder over spiritual things, we will maintain our enthusiasm for the truth. Thus we will be a source of refreshment to our brothers and to the interested ones we meet in the field service. Meditating deeply on God's greatest gift, the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, will help us to cherish the privilege of having a close relationship with our Holy Father, Jehovah. (Rom. 3:24; Jas. 4:8) Mark, a South African who spent three years in prison because of his Christian neutrality, said: "Meditation can be compared to an exciting adventure. The more we meditate on spiritual things, the more we discover new things about our God, Jehovah. At times when I'm feeling a little discouraged or anxious about the future, I pick up the Bible and meditate on a passage of Scripture. I feel that it really calms me down."

¹⁶ True, life in today's world is so full of distractions that it is sometimes very difficult to meditate on spiritual things. Another faithful African brother, named Patrick, admits: "My mind is like a mailbox filled with a variety of information, both wanted and unwanted, that needs to be sorted every day. As I

search the contents of my mind, I often find 'disquieting thoughts,' and I have to pray to Jehovah about them before I can meditate with a clear mind. Although doing this might take a little time before I can start to meditate on spiritual subjects, I feel closer to Jehovah. This opens my mind to understanding the truth better." (Ps. 94:19, fn.) Indeed, wonderful benefits come to all who are "examining the Scriptures daily" and meditating on what they learn.—Acts 17:11.

HOW DO YOU FIND THE TIME?

¹⁷ Some get up early in the morning to read, meditate, and pray. Others do so during their lunch break. You might find that this can be done early in the evening or before you go to bed. Some enjoy reading the Bible in the morning and again before retiring. Thus they "read it . . . day and night," or regularly. (Josh. 1:8) The important thing is to buy out time from less important things for daily meditation on God's Word.—Eph. 5:15, 16.

¹⁸ God's Word repeatedly promises blessings to all who meditate on it and who strive to apply what they learn. **(Read Psalm 1:1-3.)** "Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it," said Jesus. (Luke 11:28) Most important, meditating on spiritual things each day will help us to bring honor to the Grand Creator of our marvelous brain, and he will reward us with happiness now and everlasting life in his righteous new world.—Jas. 1:25; Rev. 1:3.

15, 16. (a) How do we personally benefit from pondering over spiritual matters? (b) Why may it sometimes be difficult to meditate, but why should we persist?

17. How do you find the time to meditate?

18. What does the Bible say about all who daily meditate on God's Word and strive to apply what they learn?



Drawing Near to God Has Been Good for Me

WHEN I was nine years old, I stopped growing. That was 34 years ago in Côte d’Ivoire, and even today I stand only three feet (1 m) tall. At the time that my condition became apparent, my parents encouraged me to work hard so that I would not constantly think about my appearance. I set up a fruit stand in front of our house and kept the display neat. That attracted many customers.

Of course, working hard did not change everything. I was still very short, and I had to struggle with even simple things in life, such as the height of store counters. Everything seemed to be designed for people almost twice my height. I felt sorry for myself, but that changed when I was 14 years old.

One day, two women—Jehovah’s Witnesses—purchased fruit, and then they started a Bible

study with me. Soon I realized that coming to know Jehovah and his purpose was more important than my physical situation. That did me good. Psalm 73:28 became my favorite scripture. The first part of that passage in the Bible states: “Drawing near to God is good for me.”

Quite abruptly our family moved to Burkina Faso, and my life changed dramatically. Back in our neighborhood in Côte d’Ivoire, I had been a familiar sight beside the fruit stand. But in our new surroundings, I was a stranger and, to many, a strange sight. People stared at me. I reacted by staying indoors for weeks at a time. Then I remembered how good it had been for me to draw near to Jehovah. I wrote to the branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses and was visited by the right person—Nani, a missionary on a motor scooter.

The sandy roads in our neighborhood were always slippery, and in the rainy season, muddy. Nani tumbled from her scooter countless times while coming to study with me, but she was undaunted. Then she offered to take me to the meetings. I realized that this meant venturing out of the house and enduring people’s stares. Furthermore, having me on the back of the motor scooter would add extra weight to a scooter that was



already difficult to steer. Nevertheless, I agreed, aware of the second part of my favorite scripture: “I have made the Sovereign Lord Jehovah my refuge.”

Nani and I sometimes toppled into the mud, but it was worth it to get to the meetings. What a contrast the loving smiles I received inside the Kingdom Hall were to the stares I got outside! Nine months later, I was baptized.

“To declare all your works” is the third part of my favorite scripture. I knew that the ministry would be my biggest challenge. I still remember the first time I went preaching from house to house. Children and grown-ups alike stared at me, followed me, and imitated how I walked. That really hurt, but I continually reminded myself that they needed the Paradise just as much as I did; so I persisted.

To make things easier, I got a hand-pedaled tricycle. My service partner pushed me uphill and then jumped on the tricycle as we gained momentum going downhill. The ministry, a challenge at first, became a source of great joy, so much so that in 1998, I enrolled as a regular pioneer.

I conducted many Bible studies, and five of those persons were baptized. Happily, one of my

own sisters also accepted the truth! Hearing how others progressed often buoyed me up just when I needed it. One day while suffering from a bout of malaria, I received a letter from Côte d’Ivoire. I had started a doorstep Bible study with a university student in Burkina Faso and had turned it over to a brother. The student later moved to Côte d’Ivoire. How happy I was to learn that he had become an unbaptized publisher!

How do I support myself? An organization that aids the disabled offered to teach me sewing. One instructor noticed my work habits and said: “We should teach you to make soap.” They did. I make laundry and household soap at home. People like my soap and recommend it to others. I deliver it myself, using a three-wheeled motor scooter.

Sadly, in 2004, pain caused by my deformed spinal column had increased to the point that it was only reasonable for me to stop pioneering. Nevertheless, I still have a full share in the ministry.

People say that I am known for my contagious smile. I have every reason to be happy because drawing near to God has been good for me.—As told by Sarah Maiga.

“The Naive Person Believes Every Word”

“Foolish is the man who never reads a newspaper; even more foolish is the man who believes what he reads just because it is in the newspaper.”

—August von Schlözer, German historian and publicist (1735-1809).

IF A person could not trust everything that was written in a newspaper over 200 years ago, the same applies to much of what can be read on the Internet in the 21st century. A huge amount of information—true and false, useful and worthless, harmless and dangerous—is now available, thanks to modern technology. We must be very selective about what we consider worthy of our attention. Especially could those who are new to the Internet conclude that a report or a news item, however strange or sensational, is true simply because it is online or because a friend sent it via e-mail. For good reason, the Bible warns: “The naive person believes every word, but the shrewd one ponders each step.”—Prov. 14:15.

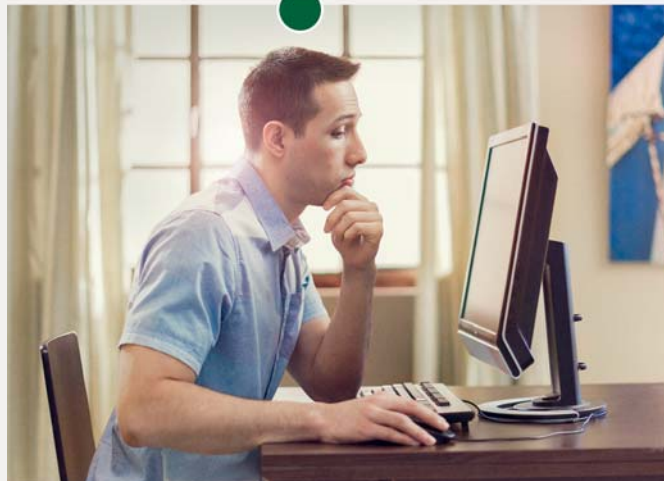
How can we become “shrewd” and identify hoaxes, urban legends, swindles, and other misinformation that may appear on our computer screens? First, ask yourself: ‘Is the item from an official, reliable website or from a blog or an unknown source? Has it already been exposed on anti-hoax websites?’* Then, use “good sense.”

* Be aware that previously exposed hoaxes and urban legends resurface now and then, sometimes slightly altered to make them appear genuine.

(Prov. 7:7) If a news item seems unbelievable, it probably is. Furthermore, when the information discredits others, think about who would benefit from such news being spread and whether the source has ulterior motives in spreading it.

COMPULSIVE FORWARDERS

Some—often in search of attention—are fixated on being the first to spread news and forward it to all their contacts without checking its authenticity or considering the consequences. (2 Sam. 13:28-33) However, if we are “shrewd,” we will think about the possible damage this could cause, perhaps to the reputation of a person or an organization.



Should I . . .

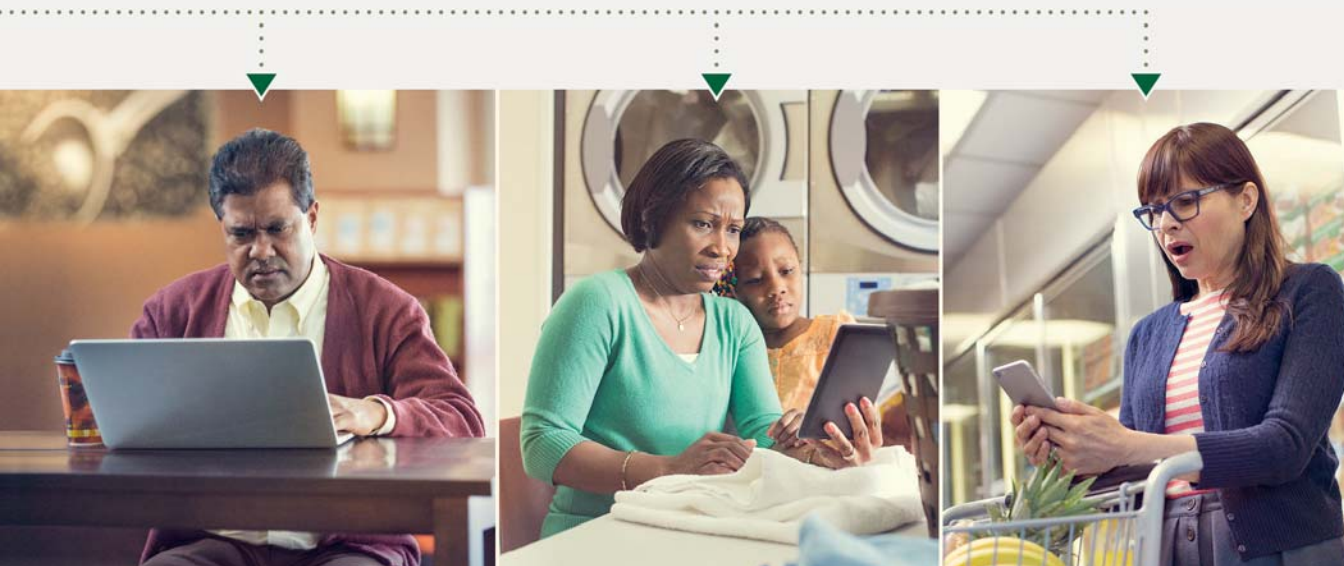
It takes effort to verify news. That is why some decide simply to leave it up to the recipient to determine if it is credible. But how much time will it take for him to do that? Time is precious. (Eph. 5:15, 16) Instead of thinking, “If in doubt, send it out,” it would be better to adopt the motto, “If in doubt, throw it out!”

Ask yourself: ‘Have I become a compulsive forwarder of e-mails? Have I ever had to write my contacts to apologize for having sent them information that turned out to be incorrect or an outright lie? Has anyone ever asked me to stop forwarding e-mails?’ Remember that whoever is on your e-mail contact list also has access to the Internet and is therefore able to look for things of interest without your help. They do not need to be inundated with funny stories, video clips, or slide shows. It is also unwise to forward recordings or transcripts of Bible talks.* Furthermore, forwarding research material, verses

* See *Our Kingdom Ministry*, April 2010, “Question Box.”

extracted for Bible study, or answers to use at congregation meetings would detract from the value of each individual’s personal preparation.

And what should you do if you find slanderous news about Jehovah’s organization on the Internet? Such material should be firmly rejected. Some feel that they must bring it to the attention of others to get their opinion, but all that does is propagate the malicious information. If we feel troubled about something we see on the Internet, we should ask Jehovah for wisdom and speak to mature brothers about it. (Jas. 1:5, 6; Jude 22, 23) Jesus, who was the object of false accusations, warned his followers that enemies would persecute them and “*lyingly* say every sort of wicked thing against [them].” (Matt. 5:11; 11:19; John 10:19-21) We need to use “thinking ability” and “discernment” to identify “the man speaking perverse things” and those “whose entire course is devious.”—Prov. 2:10-16.



forward a sensational e-mail to someone else?

RESPECT THE RIGHT OF OTHERS

We also have to be careful about news or experiences of a spiritual nature that we receive secondhand. Even if a report is true, it does not necessarily mean that it should be spread. There may be times when it would be neither right nor loving to distribute true accounts to others. (Matt. 7:12) For example, it is neither loving nor upbuilding to spread gossip, even though the information may be true. (2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Tim. 5:13) Some news may be of a confidential nature, and we should respect the right of others to divulge the information at the proper time through the appropriate channels. Spreading information ahead of time can do much harm.

Today it is possible to spread news—true or false, useful or worthless, harmless or dangerous—at an incredible speed. Anyone who sends

an e-mail or a text to even one person has to realize that whether it was intended or not, the content could travel all over the world in a flash. May we therefore resist the urge to forward information quickly and indiscriminately. When we read sensational news items, remember that love is not unduly suspicious; nor is it naive or gullible. Above all, love refuses to believe malevolent insinuations about Jehovah’s organization or lies about our brothers that are circulated by people who are slaves to “the father of the lie,” Satan the Devil. (John 8:44; 1 Cor. 13:7) Thinking ability and discernment will help us become “shrewd” and consider how to handle responsibly the increasing amount of information available to us on a daily basis. As the Bible says, “the naive will inherit foolishness, but the shrewd are crowned with knowledge.”—Prov. 14:18.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU HIT SEND:

- ☐ Is this information from a reliable source?
- ☐ Is this information confidential?
- ☐ Will this information damage someone’s reputation?
- ☐ Has anyone ever asked me to stop forwarding e-mails?



Free downloads of this magazine and other publications are available



You can also read the *New World Translation* online

Visit www.jw.org, or scan code



w15 10/15-E
150528