

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

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PERU

COVER: In the Amazonas region in northern Peru, there are many opportunities to give a witness in informal situations

POPULATION

29,734,000

PUBLISHERS

117,245

BAPTIZED IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

28,824

In Peru, our publications are being translated into six languages. More than 120 special pioneers and missionaries witness in languages other than Spanish

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STUDY ARTICLES

- **Jehovah's Reminders Are Trustworthy**
- **Make Jehovah's Reminders the Exultation of Your Heart**

Jehovah has always used reminders to guide and direct his people. What is included in those reminders? The first article highlights why we can trust God's reminders. The second discusses three ways we can cultivate unshakable trust in Jehovah's reminders.

- **Have You Been Transformed?**
- **Make Personal Decisions Wisely**

Both our upbringing and our environment powerfully influence our views and choices. How can we make sure that our decisions are in harmony with God's will? And what can help us to act in accord with what we decided? These articles will help us to make an honest self-examination in these areas.

- **Pioneering Strengthens Our Relationship With God**

We will consider eight ways that a Christian's relationship with Jehovah can be strengthened by pioneering. If you are pioneering now, what will help you to continue despite challenges? If you would like to pioneer and enjoy the resulting blessings, what can you do?



Let Contrasts Help You

Would you not agree that Jesus was the greatest Teacher to walk the earth? You may have tried to imitate some of the ways in which he taught, such as his use of questions and illustrations. Did you ever consider, though, that he often used contrasts in his teaching?

Many people use contrasts when they speak. You too may do that, often without deliberate thought. You might say something like, “They said that all the fruit was ripe; however, these are still very hard.” Or, “She was once quite a shy child, yet now she is very outgoing.”

In cases like these, you first present a fact or an idea; then you introduce a contrast by using such expressions as **but**, **however**, **rather**, or **on the other hand**. Or you might make the contrast by adding information or by strengthening the idea. When you speak that way, it just sounds natural and can help others to get your point.

Even if contrasts are not common in some languages or cultures, we do well to recognize their value. Why? Because we find many of them in God’s inspired Word. Jesus frequently used contrasts. Recall these: “People light a lamp and set it, not under the measuring basket, **but** upon the lampstand.” “I came, not to destroy [the Law], **but** to fulfill.” “You heard that it was said, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ **But** I say to you that every-

one that keeps on looking at a woman . . .” “It was said, ‘Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.’ **However**, I say to you: Do not resist him that is wicked; **but** whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other also.”—Matt. 5:15, 17, 27, 28, 38, 39.

There are similar contrasts in other Bible books. They can help you to grasp a point or emphasize a superior way of doing something. If you are a parent, reflect on this contrast: “You, fathers, do not be irritating your children, **but** go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.” (Eph. 6:4) Had the apostle Paul written simply that a father (or mother) ought to bring up a child in God’s discipline, that would have been wise and true. Still, the idea comes across very clearly with the contrast ‘not irritating them **but** raising them in the mental-regulating of Jehovah.’

Later in that chapter, Paul wrote: “We have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, **but** against . . . wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12) That contrast likely helps you to sense that you have a very serious fight. It is not against mere humans; rather, it is against wicked spirit forces.

Article continues on page 6

Some Contrasts in Ephesians Chapters 4 and 5



“We should no longer be . . . carried hither and thither . . . by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error.”—4:14.

“**But** speaking the truth, let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ.”—4:15.



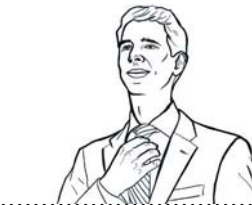
“[The nations] are in darkness mentally, . . . because of the insensibility of their hearts.”—4:18, 19.

“**But** you did not learn the Christ to be so, provided, indeed, that you heard him and were taught by means of him.”—4:20, 21.



“You should put away the old personality which conforms to your former course of conduct.”—4:22.

“**But** . . . you should be made new in the force actuating your mind, and should put on the new personality.”—4:23, 24.



“Let the stealer steal no more.”—4:28.

“**But** rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work.”—4:28.



“Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth.”—4:29.

“**But** whatever saying is good for building up.”—4:29.



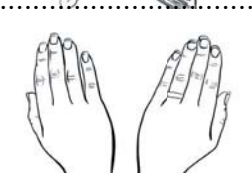
“Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness.”—4:31.

“**But** become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another.”—4:32.



“Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort or greediness not even be mentioned among you.”—5:3.

“**But** rather the giving of thanks.”—5:4.

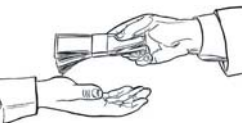
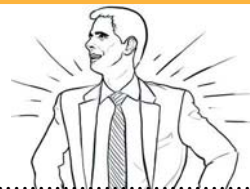


Try using this chart in your family worship!



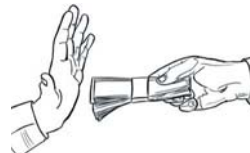
“You were once darkness.”—5:8.

“But you are now light in connection with the Lord.”—5:8.



“Quit sharing with them in the unfruitful works that belong to the darkness.”—5:11.

“But, rather, even be reproofing them.”—5:11.



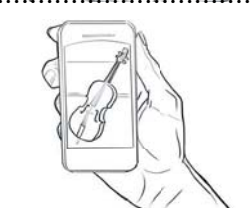
“So keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise [persons].”—5:15.

“But as wise persons, buying out the opportune time for yourselves.”—5:15, 16.



“On this account cease becoming unreasonable.”—5:17.

“But go on perceiving what the will of Jehovah is.”—5:17.



“Do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery.”—5:18.

“But keep getting filled with spirit.”—5:18.



“That [the Christ] might present the congregation to himself in its splendor, not having a spot or a wrinkle or any of such things.”—5:27.

“But that it should be holy and without blemish.”—5:27.



“No man ever hated his own flesh.”—5:29.

“But he feeds and cherishes it, as the Christ also does the congregation.”—5:29.



BENEFIT FROM CONTRASTS

In this same Bible book, Ephesians, you will find many other texts where Paul employed contrasts. Thinking about these can help us to get Paul's point and likely to understand more clearly what we should do.

You may find it both enjoyable and meaningful to consider the accompanying chart that sets out some contrasts that you find in Ephesians chapters 4 and 5. As you read each contrast, think about your own life. Ask yourself: 'Honestly, what is my attitude? How do I react in this or a similar situation? Which side of the contrast would others think represents me?' If you discern that a particular contrast brings to the fore an area you need to work on, try to do that. Let that contrast help you.

Or you may employ the chart as part of your family worship. First, all members of your family can read over the contrasts. Then one of you can mention the first part of a contrast, allowing the

others in the family to try to remember the point highlighted in the second part. That could lead to a pleasant family discussion of how you could in a fuller way apply the second part. Yes, examining the contrasts like that may help young and old to pursue Christian conduct in the family and elsewhere.

As you become more aware of the value of contrasts, you may become more adept at recognizing them in the Bible, and you may find that they are very helpful in your Christian ministry. You could, for example, say to a householder: "Many people say that every person has an immortal soul, **yet** note what God's Word says here." Or on a Bible study, you might ask: "Most people in this area believe that God and Jesus are one person; **however**, what have we found that the Bible says? And what do you believe?"

Yes, the Scriptures present us with many instructive contrasts, which can help us to walk in God's way. And we can use contrasts to help others come to know Bible truth.

Can you recall the second part of the contrast?





JEHOVAH'S REMINDERS ARE TRUSTWORTHY

“The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise.”—Ps. 19:7.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What sort of reminders does Jehovah provide in the Scriptures?

How can Jehovah's reminders help Christians today?

What reasons do we have for trusting Jehovah's reminders?

WHILE preparing for an upcoming *Watchtower* Study, have you ever thought, ‘Haven’t we considered this subject before?’ If you have been associated with the Christian congregation for some time, you likely have noted that some topics are discussed time and again. Studying about God’s Kingdom, the ransom, the disciple-making work, and such qualities as love and faith is a regular part of our spiritual diet. By reviewing these subjects, we are helped to remain healthy in the faith and to “become doers of the word, and not hearers only.”—Jas. 1:22.

² The Hebrew noun rendered “reminder” often refers to laws, commands, and regulations that God gives to his people. Unlike human laws, which often need to be amended or updated, Jehovah’s laws and regulations are always trustworthy. Though some of them are given for a particular time or situation, they never become faulty or inadequate. The psalmist said: “The righteousness of your reminders is to time indefinite.”—Ps. 119:144.

³ You have perhaps noted that Jehovah’s reminders at times include messages of warning. The nation of Israel regularly received warnings through God’s prophets. For example, shortly before the Israelites were to enter the Promised Land, Moses warned them: “Watch out for yourselves for fear your heart may be enticed, and you do turn aside and worship other gods and bow down to them, and

1. What subjects are regularly discussed by God’s people, and how do we benefit by reviewing them?

2. (a) To what do God’s reminders often refer? (b) How do God’s reminders differ from man’s?

3, 4. (a) Jehovah’s reminders may include what? (b) How would the Israelites benefit if they heeded them?

Jehovah's anger does blaze against you." (Deut. 11:16, 17) The Bible reveals that God gave his people scores of helpful reminders.

⁴ On many other occasions, Jehovah urged the Israelites to fear him, to listen to his voice, and to sanctify his name. (Deut. 4:29-31; 5:28, 29) If they heeded these reminders, they were sure to receive many blessings.—Lev. 26:3-6; Deut. 28:1-4.

HOW ISRAEL RESPONDED TO GOD'S REMINDERS

⁵ Throughout Israel's tumultuous history, God held true to his promise. For instance, when Assyrian King Sennacherib invaded Judah and threatened to overthrow King Hezekiah, Jehovah intervened by dispatching an angel. In just one night, God's angel destroyed "every valiant, mighty man" in the Assyrian army, so that Sennacherib was forced to return home humiliated. (2 Chron. 32:21; 2 Ki. 19:35) Why did God fight for King Hezekiah? Because "he [Hezekiah] kept sticking to Jehovah. He did not turn aside from following him, but he continued keeping his commandments."—2 Ki. 18:1, 5, 6.

⁶ Another example of one who obeyed Jehovah's commands is King Josiah. Beginning at the tender age of eight, "he proceeded to do what was right in Jehovah's eyes . . . He did not turn aside to the right or to the left." (2 Chron. 34:1, 2) Josiah demonstrated his trust in Jehovah by cleansing the land of idols and restoring true worship. In so doing, Josiah brought blessings not only to himself but also to the entire nation.—*Read 2 Chronicles 34:31-33.*

5. Why did Jehovah fight for King Hezekiah?
6. How did King Josiah put trust in Jehovah?



Jehovah's reminders moved Josiah to act in behalf of true worship
(See paragraph 6)

⁷ Sadly, however, God's people did not always put their full trust in Jehovah's reminders. Over the centuries, they vacillated between obedience and disobedience. When their faith waned, they were often, to use the apostle Paul's words, "carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching." (Eph. 4:13, 14) And as foretold, when they did not put their trust in God's reminders, they reaped bitter fruitage.—Lev. 26:23-25; Jer. 5:23-25.

⁸ In what way can we benefit from

7. When Israel disregarded Jehovah's reminders, what was the result?
8. How can we learn from Israel's example?

Israel's example? As they did, God's modern-day servants receive counsel and discipline. (2 Pet. 1:12) God's inspired Word can serve as a reminder to us every time we read it. As free moral agents, we can choose to obey Jehovah's directions or we can pursue what seems right in our own eyes. (Prov. 14:12) Let us consider some reasons why we can put our trust in Jehovah's reminders and how we benefit by heeding them.

SUBJECT YOURSELF TO GOD AND LIVE

⁹ When the Israelites set out on what became a 40-year trek through a "fear-inspiring wilderness," Jehovah did not give them specific details beforehand as to how he would direct, protect, and care for them. Still, he repeatedly demonstrated that they could trust in him and his instructions. Using a pillar of cloud by day and one of fire by night, Jehovah reminded the Israelites that he was backing them as he led them across that inhospitable terrain. (Deut. 1:19; Ex. 40:36-38) He also provided for their basic needs. "Their very garments did not wear out, and their feet themselves did not become swollen." Indeed, "they lacked nothing."—Neh. 9:19-21.

¹⁰ God's servants today are on the threshold of a righteous new world. Do we trust in Jehovah to provide what we need in order to survive the coming "great tribulation"? (Matt. 24:21, 22; Ps. 119:40, 41) True, Jehovah has not supplied a pillar of cloud nor one of fire to guide us into the new world. But he is using his organization to help us remain vigilant. For example, increased emphasis has been placed on building up our

9. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, how did Jehovah assure them that he was backing them?

10. How is Jehovah guiding his people today?

spirituality through personal Bible reading, having a Family Worship evening, as well as being regular in meeting attendance and in the ministry. Have we made adjustments in order to follow these instructions? Doing so will help us to build the kind of faith that will preserve us alive into the new world.

¹¹ In addition to helping us stay awake spiritually, the directions that we have received help us with matters of everyday life. Examples include maintaining a balanced view of material things and keeping a simple eye in order to reduce anxiety. We have also benefited from guidance regarding our dress and grooming, choosing wholesome entertainment, and deciding on the appropriate amount of education. And think of the safety reminders we have received as to our homes, automobiles, Kingdom Halls, and preparing for possible emergencies. Such counsel shows that God cares about our well-being.

REMINDERS HELPED EARLY CHRISTIANS TO REMAIN FAITHFUL

¹² In the first century, God's people received regular reminders. Jesus repeatedly spoke to his disciples about the need to cultivate humility. However, he did more than simply tell his disciples what it meant to be humble—he showed them how. On his final day on earth as a human, Jesus gathered the apostles for the Passover. While his apostles were eating, Jesus got up from the meal and washed their feet—an act that was usually performed by a servant.

11. What are ways in which God shows his care for us?

12. (a) What is one subject that Jesus repeatedly spoke to his disciples about? (b) What act of humility left a lasting impression on Peter, and how should it affect us?



Applying Jehovah's reminders helps us to keep
our Kingdom Halls safe and accessible
(See paragraph 11)

(John 13:1-17) This humble act left a lasting impression on them. Some 30 years later, the apostle Peter, who had been present at that meal, gave fellow believers counsel about humility. (1 Pet. 5:5) Jesus' example should move all of us to be humble in our dealings with one another.—Phil. 2:5-8.

¹³ The need for strong faith was another topic that Jesus often discussed with his disciples. Following their failed attempt to cast out a demon from a demon-possessed boy, the disciples asked Jesus: "Why is it we could not expel it?" Jesus answered: "Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, If you have faith the size of a mustard

13. Jesus reminded his disciples about the need to develop what essential quality?

grain, . . . nothing will be impossible for you." (Matt. 17:14-20) Throughout Jesus' ministry, he taught his disciples that faith is an essential quality. (*Read Matthew 21:18-22.*) Are we taking advantage of the opportunities available to us to strengthen our faith through the up-building instruction provided at conventions, assemblies, and Christian meetings? These are much more than happy gatherings; they are occasions for us to demonstrate trust in Jehovah.

¹⁴ The Christian Greek Scriptures are replete with reminders for us to show love for one another. Jesus said that the second greatest commandment is to "love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:39) Similarly, Jesus' half brother James called love "the kingly law." (Jas. 2:8) The apostle John wrote: "Beloved ones, I am writing you, not a new commandment, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning." (1 John 2:7, 8) To what was John referring as the "old commandment"? He was referring to the command to love. It was "old" in the sense that Jesus had given it decades earlier, "from the beginning." But it was also "new" in that it called for self-sacrificing love, which the disciples might need as they faced new circumstances. As disciples of Christ, do we not appreciate warnings that help us to guard against developing the selfish spirit so characteristic of this world, which can erode our love of neighbor?

¹⁵ Jesus showed personal interest in people. We see his loving concern when he healed the sick and infirm and when he resurrected the dead. However, Je-

14. Why is it important to cultivate Christlike love today?

15. What was Jesus' primary mission on earth?

sus' primary mission was not that of healing people physically. His preaching and teaching had a far more enduring impact on people's lives. How so? We know that those whom Jesus healed and resurrected in the first century, for example, eventually grew old and died, whereas those who responded favorably to the message he preached put themselves in line for everlasting life.—John 11:25, 26.

¹⁶ The preaching work that Jesus started in the first century is being done on an even grander scale today. Yes, Jesus commissioned his disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations." (Matt. 28:19) Indeed they have, and we can say, indeed we have! More than seven million active Witnesses of Jehovah are zealously proclaiming God's Kingdom in more than 230 lands, and the Witnesses regularly study the Bible with millions. This preaching gives evidence that we are living in the last days.

TRUST IN JEHOVAH TODAY

¹⁷ Clearly, reminders helped early Christians to remain firm in the faith. Imagine the encouragement that Timothy must have received when the apostle Paul, who was then a prisoner in Rome, told him: "Keep holding the pattern of healthful words that you heard from me." (2 Tim. 1:13) After encouraging fellow Christians to cultivate such qualities as endurance, brotherly affection, and self-control, the apostle Peter said: "I shall be disposed always to remind you of these things, although you know them and are firmly set in the truth."—2 Pet. 1:5-8, 12.

¹⁶. How extensive is the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work today?

¹⁷. What counsel did Paul and Peter provide?

¹⁸ Yes, the letters that Paul and Peter wrote conveyed "sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets." (2 Pet. 3:2) Did our first-century brothers resent receiving such direction? No, for it was an expression of God's love, which helped them to "go on growing in the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."—2 Pet. 3:18.

¹⁹ Today, we have ample reasons for putting trust in Jehovah's reminders, contained in his infallible Word, the Bible. (**Read Joshua 23:14.**) Within its pages, we find God's dealings with imperfect humankind over thousands of years. This historical narrative was recorded for our benefit. (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11) We have seen the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Prophecy could be likened to reminders that are told in advance. For example, millions have flocked to the pure worship of Jehovah, as was prophesied would occur in "the final part of the days." (Isa. 2:2, 3) Worsening world conditions also fulfill Bible prophecy. And, as mentioned, the extensive preaching campaign going on worldwide is a direct fulfillment of Jesus' words.—Matt. 24:14.

²⁰ Our Creator has built up a record that we can put our trust in. Are we benefiting from it? We need to put faith in his reminders. That is what Rosellen did. She relates: "As I began to put my full trust in Jehovah, I began to see more clearly his loving hand sustaining and strengthening me." May we likewise benefit from keeping Jehovah's reminders.

¹⁸. How did first-century Christians view reminders?

¹⁹, ²⁰. Why should we trust Jehovah's reminders, and how do we benefit from doing so?



MAKE JEHOVAH'S REMINDERS THE EXULTATION OF YOUR HEART

"I have taken your reminders as a possession to time indefinite."—PS. 119:111.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What reason do we have for exulting in Jehovah's reminders?

How can we build trust in Jehovah?

Why is it important to keep busy in Kingdom activities?

HUMANS respond to direction in a variety of ways. A reminder from someone in authority may be accepted graciously, while counsel from a peer or a subordinate may be rejected outright. Emotional responses to discipline and admonition also vary greatly. Reactions may range from sorrow, sadness, or shame to feeling motivated, challenged, and involved. Why the difference? One factor is pride. Indeed, a haughty spirit can dull a person's judgment, causing him to dismiss counsel and miss out on valuable instruction.—Prov. 16:18.

² True Christians, on the other hand, appreciate helpful advice, especially when it is based on God's Word. Jehovah's reminders give valuable insight, teaching us and helping us to avoid such pitfalls as materialism, sexual immorality, and drug or alcohol abuse. (Prov. 20:1; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:3-5; 1 Tim. 6:6-11) Moreover, we rejoice over "the good condition of the heart" that results from obeying God's reminders.—Isa. 65:14.

³ To preserve our precious relationship with our heavenly Father, we must continue to apply Jehovah's wise instruction in our life. How fine it is if our attitude reflects that of the psalmist who wrote: "I have taken your reminders as a possession to time indefinite, for they are the exultation of my heart"! (Ps. 119:111) Do we similarly take delight in Jehovah's

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1. (a) In what ways do humans react to reminders, and why? (b) How might pride affect one's view of counsel?
 2. Why do true Christians appreciate advice from God's Word?
 3. What attitude of the psalmist would it be good for us to imitate?

commandments, or do we sometimes view them as burdensome? Even if we occasionally chafe at some counsel we receive, we need not despair. We can cultivate unshakable trust in God's superior wisdom! Let us consider three ways.

BUILD TRUST THROUGH PRAYER

⁴ King David had many ups and downs in his life, but one thing remained constant—his implicit trust in his Creator. He said: "To you, O Jehovah, I raise my very soul. O my God, in you have I put my trust." (Ps. 25:1, 2) What helped David to develop such trust in his heavenly Father?

⁵ Many people pray to God only when they are in sore straits. What if the only time you heard from a friend or a relative was when he needed money or a personal favor? In time, you might begin to question his motive for seeking you out. David, however, was not like that. His relationship with Jehovah reflected his faith in and love for his God throughout his life—in good times and bad.—Ps. 40:8.

⁶ Notice David's words of praise and thanksgiving to Jehovah: "O Jehovah our Lord, how majestic your name is in all the earth, you whose dignity is recounted above the heavens!" (Ps. 8:1) Do you not sense the intimate relationship that David had with his heavenly Father? David's appreciation for God's magnificence and splendor inspired him to exalt Jehovah "all day long."—Ps. 35:28.

⁷ Like David, we need to communi-

cate with Jehovah regularly in order to build trust in him. The Bible says: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you." (Jas. 4:8) Drawing close to God in prayer is also an important way that we obtain holy spirit.—*Read 1 John 3:22.*

⁸ When you pray, do you tend to repeat phrases or use the same expressions time and again? If so, before offering your prayer, spend a few moments thinking about what you want to say. If we repeated the same words to some friend or relative every time we spoke to him, would he find that pleasant? He might start to turn a deaf ear to us. Of course, Jehovah would never reject a sincere prayer of one of his loyal servants. But we do well to avoid getting into a rut when communicating with him.

⁹ Obviously, our prayers cannot be superficial if we wish to draw close to God. The more we pour out our heart to Jehovah, the closer we will be to him and the more we will trust in him. What, though, should we include in our prayers? God's Word answers: "In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." (Phil. 4:6) The fact is, anything that affects our relationship with God or our life as one of his servants is a proper subject of prayer.

¹⁰ It is instructive to consider the words of faithful men and women whose prayers have been recorded in the Bible. (1 Sam. 1:10, 11; Acts 4:24-31) The Psalms contain a collection

4. What is one thing that remained constant in David's life?

5, 6. God's Word tells us what about the relationship that David had with Jehovah?

7. How do we benefit by drawing close to God in prayer?

8. Why should we avoid offering repetitious prayers?

9, 10. (a) What might we include in our prayers? (b) What can help us to offer heartfelt prayers?

of heartfelt prayers and songs to Jehovah. Every human emotion from agony to pure joy is revealed in these prayers and songs. Analyzing such expressions made by loyal ones can help us to offer up meaningful prayers to Jehovah.

MEDITATE ON GOD'S REMINDERS

¹¹ David declared: "The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise." (Ps. 19:7) Yes, even if we are inexperienced, we can become wise by obeying God's commandments. Some Scriptural admonition, though, requires meditation if we are to benefit fully. That might be said about keeping our integrity when under pressure at school or on our job, upholding God's standard on blood, maintaining Christian neutrality, and applying Bible principles regarding dress and grooming. Getting God's mind on such matters will help us to anticipate problems. Then we can resolve in our heart what to do should the situation arise. Such forethought and advance preparation can save us much heartache.—Prov. 15:28.

¹² As we await the realization of what God has promised, does our life course show that we are remaining spiritually awake? For example, do we truly believe that Babylon the Great will soon be destroyed? Are future blessings, such as everlasting life on a paradise earth, as real to us now as when we first learned of them? Have we maintained our zeal for the ministry rather than letting personal affairs take precedence in our life? What about the resurrection hope, the sanctification of Jehovah's name, and the vindication of his sovereignty? Are

those still vital issues for us? Meditating on such questions may help us to do as the psalmist said, keep God's "reminders as a possession to time indefinite." —Ps. 119:111.

¹³ Some things mentioned in the Bible may not be fully understood now because it is not yet Jehovah's due time for making them clear. Jesus again and again told his apostles that it would be necessary for him to suffer and be put to death. (*Read Matthew 12:40; 16:21.*) But the apostles did not understand what he meant. They got the sense after his death and resurrection when he materialized a human body, appeared to a number of disciples, and "opened up their minds fully to grasp the meaning of the Scriptures." (Luke 24:44-46; Acts 1:3) Likewise, until holy spirit was poured out on them at Pentecost 33 C.E., Christ's followers did not comprehend that God's Kingdom was to be established in heaven.—Acts 1:6-8.

¹⁴ In a similar way, at the beginning of the 20th century, there were a number of wrong expectations among true Christians regarding "the last days." (2 Tim. 3:1) For instance, in the year 1914, some thought that their being taken to heaven was imminent. When their hopes were not immediately realized, an earnest reexamination of the Scriptures brought into focus that a great preaching campaign lay ahead. (Mark 13:10) Hence, in 1922, J. F. Rutherford, who then took the lead in the preaching work, told those assembled at the in-

13. Why did first-century Christians find some things difficult to understand? Give an example.

14. At the beginning of the 20th century, what good example did many brothers set despite having misunderstandings regarding the last days?

11. Why do we need to meditate on admonition from God?

12. Thinking on what can help us to keep God's reminders?



Will you show trust similar to that of Jehovah's people in Joshua's day?
(See paragraphs 17, 18)

ternational convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, U.S.A.: "Behold, the King reigns! You are his publicity agents. Therefore *advertise, advertise, advertise*, the King and his kingdom." From that time onward, proclaiming "the good news of the kingdom" has been a hallmark of Jehovah's modern-day servants.—Matt. 4: 23; 24:14.

¹⁵ By our meditating on the marvelous way that Jehovah has dealt with his people, both past and present, we gain greater confidence in his ability to carry out his will and purpose in the future. At the same time, God's reminders help us to keep fresh in our minds and hearts his prophecies that are awaiting fulfillment. We can be sure that doing so will help us to build trust in his promises.

15. How do we benefit from meditating on the way God has dealt with his people?

BUILD TRUST THROUGH ACTS OF WORSHIP

¹⁶ Our God, Jehovah, is a dynamic God, a God of action. "Who is vigorous like you, O Jah?" asked the psalmist. He added: "Your hand is strong, your right hand is exalted." (Ps. 89:8, 13) Consistent with that, Jehovah appreciates and blesses the effort that we put forth to promote Kingdom interests. He sees that his servants—whether male or female, young or old—do not sit back and eat "the bread of laziness." (Prov. 31:27) In imitation of our Creator, we keep busy in theocratic activities. Serving God wholeheartedly is personally rewarding for us, and it gives Jehovah great delight to bless our ministry.—*Read Psalm 62:12.*

16. What blessings come from remaining active in the ministry?

¹⁷ In what way do acts of faith help us to build trust in Jehovah? Consider the Scriptural account of Israel's entry into the Promised Land. Jehovah had instructed the priests carrying the ark of the covenant to march right into the Jordan River. However, as the people made their approach, they could see that the spring rains had caused the river to swell to flood stage. What would the Israelites do? Set up camp on the river bank and wait weeks or longer for the floodwaters to recede? No, they put full trust in Jehovah and followed his directions. The result? The account reads: "As soon as the feet of the priests touched the water, the river stopped flowing, . . . and the priests stood in the middle of the dry riverbed near Jericho while everyone else crossed over." (Josh. 3:12-17, *Contemporary English Version*) Imagine how heartening it must have been to see those raging waters stopped up! Indeed, the Israelites' faith in Jehovah was strengthened because they trusted in his directions.

¹⁸ True, Jehovah does not perform such miracles in behalf of his people today, but he does bless their acts of faith. God's active force empowers them to carry out the assigned work of preaching the Kingdom message worldwide. And Jehovah's foremost Witness, the resurrected Christ Jesus, assured his disciples that he would back them up in this important work: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations . . . I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 28:19, 20) Many Witnesses who may have had a tendency to be shy or

timid can personally attest that God's holy spirit has given them the courage to speak to strangers in the field ministry. —*Read Psalm 119:46; 2 Corinthians 4:7.*

¹⁹ Some brothers and sisters have significant physical limitations because of sickness or advanced age. Yet, they can be sure that "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort" understands the circumstances of each true Christian. (2 Cor. 1:3) He appreciates all that we do to promote Kingdom interests. All of us need to bear in mind that it is primarily our faith in Christ's ransom provision that preserves alive our soul while we do all that our circumstances permit.—Heb. 10:39.

²⁰ Our worship involves expending our time, energy, and material resources to the fullest extent possible. Yes, we want with all our heart to "do the work of an evangelizer." (2 Tim. 4:5) The fact is, we are happy to do so, as it helps others to "come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Tim. 2:4) Clearly, honoring and praising Jehovah makes us rich spiritually. (Prov. 10:22) And it helps us to build an unbreakable bond of trust with our Creator.—Rom. 8:35-39.

²¹ As we have discussed, trusting in Jehovah for wise direction does not come about automatically; we need to work at having that trust. So by all means, rely on Jehovah through prayer. Meditate on how Jehovah has worked out his will in the past and how he will do so in the future. And continue to build trust in Jehovah through acts of worship. Indeed, Jehovah's reminders will last to time indefinite. So can you!

19. Despite our limitations, what assurance do we have?

20, 21. What are some ways that we demonstrate trust in Jehovah?

17, 18. Why can we say that acts of faith help us to build trust in Jehovah's counsel? Give an example.



HAVE YOU BEEN TRANSFORMED?

ALL of us are deeply influenced by our upbringing and by our environment. We dress a certain way; we like certain foods; we behave in a certain manner. Why? In part, because of the influence of the people around us and our circumstances in life.

² There are, however, things that are far more important than our choice of food and style of clothing. For example, we are brought up to view some things as right and acceptable but to reject other things as wrong and unacceptable. Many such matters are personal and vary from individual to individual. Our choices may even reflect the proddings of our conscience. The Bible acknowledges that often “people of the nations that do not have law do by nature the things of the law.” (Rom. 2:14) But does this mean that as long as there is no clearly stated law from God, we can just follow the ways and standards that we are brought up with and that are common in our area?

³ There are at least two important reasons why that is not so for Christians. First, the Bible reminds us: “There exists a way that is upright before a man, but the ways of death are the end of it afterward.” (Prov. 16:25) Because of our imperfect nature, we humans do not have the full ability to determine what is truly beneficial for us to guide our steps perfectly. (Prov. 28:26; Jer. 10:23) Second, the Bible shows that trends and standards of the world are manipulated and controlled by none other than Satan, “the god of this system of things.” (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19) Therefore, if we want Jehovah’s blessing and approval, we need to heed the admonition found at **Romans 12:2.—Read.**

- 1, 2. How do our upbringing and our environment affect us?
3. For what two reasons do Christians not simply go along with commonly accepted ways and standards?

“Be transformed by making your mind over.”—ROM. 12:2.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

Why must all Christians be concerned with being transformed?

What transformation must each Christian make?

How can we succeed in making the necessary transformation?

⁴ A number of important points recorded at Romans 12:2 merit our close attention. (1) Why do we need to be “transformed”? (2) What does the transformation involve? and (3) How can we be transformed? Let us consider these questions.

WHY BE TRANSFORMED?

⁵ The apostle Paul’s words recorded in the letter to the Romans were addressed, not to unbelievers or the general populace, but to his fellow anointed Christians. (Rom. 1:7) He urged them to be transformed and to “quit being fashioned after this system of things.” For the Christians in Rome at that time, about 56 C.E., the “system of things” involved the standards, customs, manners, and styles that characterized the Roman world. Paul’s use of the word “quit” implies that some of them were still being influenced by that system of things. What kind of influences did it exert on our brothers and sisters back then?

⁶ Today, tourists in Rome usually see the remains of its temples, tombs, monuments, arenas, theaters, and so forth. Some of these date back to the first century. Such vestiges of the past offer insight into the social and religious life in ancient Rome. We can also read in history books about its gladiatorial games, chariot races, and plays and musicals on a wide range of subjects, some of them shameful. Rome was also a prosperous center of commerce, so opportunities

4. What will we consider in this article?

5. For whom would Paul’s words at Romans 12:2 have special meaning?

6, 7. In Paul’s day, how did the social and religious conditions in Rome pose a challenge for Christians?



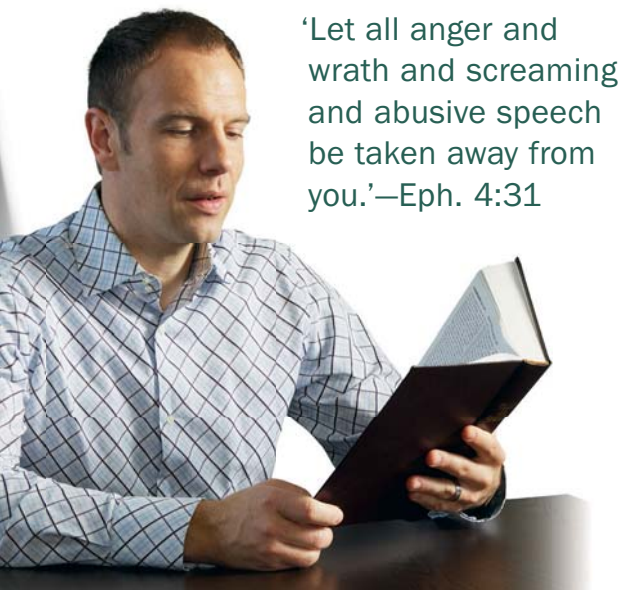
Many need to come out of Satan’s world and be transformed
(See paragraph 9)

for material gains abounded.—Rom. 6: 21; 1 Pet. 4:3, 4.

⁷ Despite their many temples with their pantheon of gods, the Romans were not known to cultivate a real, personal relationship with the gods they worshipped. To them, religion consisted mainly of rituals—for births, marriages, and funerals—that were part of their social order. You can imagine how all of that posed a challenge for the Christians in Rome. Many of them came from that background, so they obviously needed to be transformed in order to become true Christians, and the transformation would not have ended on the day of their baptism.

⁸ Like the Roman world, the world today is also a threat to dedicated Christians. Why is that so? Because the spirit of the world is manifest in many ways. (*Read Ephesians 2:2, 3; 1 John 2:16.*) Exposed to the world’s desires, thinking, values, and morals day in and day out, we are in constant danger of being ab-

8. How does the world pose a threat to Christians today?



‘Let all anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you.’—Eph. 4:31

sorbed by the world. Consequently, we have abundant reason for heeding the inspired admonition to “quit being fashioned after this system of things” and “be transformed.” What must we do?

WHAT NEEDS TO BE TRANSFORMED?

⁹ As a person studies and applies Bible truth, he begins to make spiritual progress. Reflecting this progress, he makes changes in his life according to what he has learned. He puts away false religious practices and undesirable traits of his former way of life and cultivates the Christlike personality. (Eph. 4:22-24) We are happy to see hundreds of thousands make such progress each year and become qualified to get baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah God. This, to be sure, makes Jehovah’s heart glad. (Prov. 27:11) However, we do well to consider: Are these changes all that are needed?

¹⁰ Actually, being transformed in-

9. Before qualifying for baptism, what changes have many made?

10. How is transformation different from improvement?

volves more than making progress or improving. A product may be labeled or advertised as “improved,” but essentially it is still the same product. There might be just one new ingredient, and the packaging might be more attractive. As to the expression “be transformed,” a note in *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* explains: “In Rom[ans] 12:2 being outwardly conformed to the things of this age [or system of things] is contrasted with being transformed (or transfigured) inwardly by the renewal of the thoughts through the Holy Spirit’s power.” Hence, the transformation that a Christian must make is not simply the putting away of harmful habits, unwholesome speech, and immoral conduct. Some people who have no knowledge of the Bible endeavor to keep their life more or less free of such things. What, then, is involved in the transformation that Christians must undergo?

¹¹ “Be transformed by making your mind over,” Paul wrote. The “mind” relates to our thinking faculties. But as used in the Bible, it includes our mental inclination, attitude, and power of reason. Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul described people who reflected “a disapproved mental state.” Such ones were given to “unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, badness, being full of envy, murder, strife, deceit,” and other hurtful things. (Rom. 1:28-31) We can see why Paul urged those who were brought up in such an environment and became servants of God to “be transformed” and ‘make their mind over.’

¹² Sadly, we are surrounded by people

11. Paul showed that transformation is brought about in what way?

12. What do you see is the general thinking of people today, and how may this attitude pose a danger for Christians?

in the world who fit Paul's description. They likely think that it is old-fashioned or intolerant to insist on standards and principles. Many teachers and parents take a permissive approach and promote a "liberal" way of thinking. To them, everything is relative; nothing is absolute. Even many who claim to be religious feel that they are at liberty to do what they think is right, without any obligation to obey God and his commandments. (Ps. 14:1) This attitude may pose a real threat to true Christians. The unwary may adopt the same view of theocratic arrangements. They may be unwilling to go along with congregation procedures and may even complain about anything not to their liking. Or they may have reservations about Bible-based counsel on entertainment, use of the Internet, and the pursuit of higher education.

¹³ Accordingly, for us not to be fashioned, or molded, by the world any longer, we need to make an honest appraisal of our innermost attitudes and feelings, our goals, and our values. Such things may be hidden from public view. Others may tell us that we are doing well. Yet, we alone know if we really have allowed what we have learned from the Bible to transform us in these critical areas and to continue to transform us.—*Read James 1:23-25.*

HOW THE TRANSFORMATION IS MADE

¹⁴ The transformation involves what we are inside, so to bring it about, we need something that can penetrate the surface, reaching deep inside us. What can help us in that way? When we learn

13. Why should we make an honest appraisal of ourselves?

14. What can help to bring about needed changes?

what Jehovah requires of us in harmony with his purpose as stated in the Bible, our response to what we read reveals what is in our heart and what adjustments we need to make in order to act in accord with the "perfect will of God."—Rom. 12:2; Heb. 4:12.

¹⁵ *Read Isaiah 64:8.* The word picture that the prophet Isaiah painted gives us a practical point to consider. How does Jehovah, the Potter, mold us, the clay? Surely he does not change us physically, perhaps to give us a more attractive appearance or a more appealing physique. Jehovah provides not physical but spiritual training. If we allow him to mold us, the transformation that results is internal, or spiritual—precisely what we need in order to combat worldly influences. How does the molding process work?

¹⁶ To make fine quality pottery, a potter uses high-grade clay. However, there are two things he needs to do. First, the clay needs to be washed to remove any foreign material or mineral contamination. Then, the clay must be mixed with the right amount of water and worked so that it will retain its shape after being molded under pressure.

¹⁷ Note that water is used both in cleansing the clay of impurities and in giving it the right consistency and pliancy for it to be made into a vessel, even a delicate one. Do we see the similar roles that God's Word can play in our lives? It can help us to rid ourselves of our old way of thinking when we did not know God and to be transformed into something valuable in his eyes. (Eph. 5:

15. Jehovah's molding can produce what kind of transformation?

16, 17. (a) Describe what a potter does to the clay he uses to make fine pottery. (b) How does God's Word help us to be transformed into something valuable to Jehovah?

26) Think how many times we have been urged to read the Bible daily and be regular in attending Christian meetings, where God's Word is being considered. Why have we been encouraged to do these things? Because by doing so, we are submitting ourselves to Jehovah's molding.—Ps. 1:2; Acts 17:11; Heb. 10:24, 25.

¹⁸ For God's Word to produce in us needed transformation, regularly reading and learning from the Bible is but a beginning. Many people read the Bible from time to time and thereby have come to be quite familiar with what it says. Perhaps you have met such ones as you engage in the field ministry. Some are even able to recite Bible passages from memory.* Yet, this may have little effect on their thinking and way of life. What is missing? For God's Word to influence and transform a person, he must allow it to be "sounded down" into the heart. (Gal. 6:6, ftn.) Hence, we need to spend time thinking about what we are learning. It would be good to ask ourselves: 'Am I convinced that this is more than just some religious teaching? Have I not seen that it is the truth? Moreover, do I see ways to apply in my own life what I am learning and not view it only as something I might teach to others? Do I feel that Jehovah is talking to me personally?' Thinking and meditating on such questions can help us to deepen the feelings we have for Jehovah in our hearts. Our love for him will grow. When the heart is thus touched, positive changes will follow.—Prov. 4:23; Luke 6:45.

* See the example given in *The Watchtower* of February 1, 1994, page 9, paragraph 7.

18. (a) Why is meditation essential if we want God's Word to influence and transform us? (b) What questions can be helpful?



Being transformed will help you handle problems in a better way than in the past

(See paragraph 18)

¹⁹ Regularly reading God's Word and meditating on it will motivate us to continue to do what we likely have already done to some extent: 'Strip off the old personality with its practices and clothe yourselves with the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new.' (Col. 3:9, 10) Yes, we can have continued success as we get the real sense and impact of God's Word. The resulting new Christian personality will help to protect us against Satan's cunning machinations.

²⁰ "As obedient children, quit being fashioned according to the desires you formerly had," the apostle Peter reminds us, but "become holy yourselves in all your conduct." (1 Pet. 1:14, 15) Doing all we can to put away the thinking and attitudes we formerly had and letting ourselves be transformed will result in blessings, as we will see in the following article.

19, 20. Applying what Bible counsel can bring us real benefit?



MAKE PERSONAL DECISIONS WISELY

DECISIONS! Decisions! Every day we are faced with many of them. How do you feel about the typical decisions that you face? Some people are eager to decide everything for themselves. They insist on their right to make their own decisions, resenting even the thought of someone else deciding for them. However, there are those who dread having to make decisions beyond the routine things in life. Some turn to guidebooks or counselors and perhaps spend large sums to get the advice they feel they need.

² Many of us are somewhere in-between. We realize that some things are beyond our jurisdiction and we can do nothing about them; yet, we appreciate that in many areas of life, we can make decisions according to our personal preferences. (Gal. 6:5) Even so, we likely admit that not all the decisions we make are necessarily wise or beneficial.

³ As servants of Jehovah, we can be happy that he has provided clear directions regarding many of the important matters in our life. We know that if we follow such guidelines, we can make decisions that will both please Jehovah and benefit us. Still, we may face issues and situations that are not specifically addressed in God's Word. How, then, do we decide what we should do? For example, we know that we should not steal. (Eph. 4:28) But what exactly constitutes stealing? Is it determined by the value of the object taken, the motive, or something else? How do we decide what to do in matters that some say are a gray area? What is there to guide us?

1, 2. Do you like making decisions, and how do you feel about some decisions that you have made?

3. What directions do we have as to making decisions, but what challenge remains?

"Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding."

—PROV. 3:5.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What does it mean to use the spirit of a sound mind when we make decisions?

How can we cultivate the ability to make wise decisions?

What can help us to follow through on decisions we made?

THE SPIRIT OF A SOUND MIND

⁴ When we mention that we are about to make an important decision, a fellow Christian may comment that we need to proceed with the spirit of a sound mind. That, of course, is good advice. The Bible gives us this caution against rushing into action: “Everyone that is hasty surely heads for want.” (Prov. 21:5) But what does it mean to use the spirit of a sound mind? Does it simply mean that we should take our time, think the matter through, be reasonable, and exercise good judgment? All these factors are helpful in reaching a good decision, but there is more to exercising the spirit of a sound mind.—Rom. 12:3; 1 Pet. 4:7.

⁵ We must admit that none of us are born with a perfectly sound mind. Why is that so? Because all of us are born in sin and imperfection and thus are far from being completely sound in body or mind. (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:23) In addition, many of us were once among those whose minds were “blinded” by Satan; we were once ignorant of Jehovah and his righteous standards. (2 Cor. 4:4; Titus 3:3) Hence, were we to base our decisions solely on what we feel is good and reasonable, we might be deceiving ourselves, no matter how much we ponder the decision before us.—Prov. 14:12.

⁶ Though we are far from being sound in body and mind, Jehovah, our heavenly Father, is perfect in every respect. (Deut. 32:4) Happily, he has made it possible for us to make our mind over and to cultivate soundness of mind. (**Read 2 Timothy 1:7.**) As Christians, we want

to think and reason sensibly and to act accordingly. We must rein in, or control, our thinking and feelings and imitate the way Jehovah thinks, feels, and acts.

⁷ Consider an example. A common practice among certain immigrants is to send their newborn babies back to their relatives to be looked after so that the immigrant parents can continue to work and make money.* A woman living in a foreign country gave birth to a lovely baby boy. About that time, she started to study the Bible and made fine spiritual progress. Friends and relatives began pressuring her and her husband to send the baby back home to the grandparents. However, through her study the wife in particular realized that as a parent, it was her God-given responsibility to bring up her child. (Ps. 127:3; Eph. 6:4) Should she follow the custom that to many seemed to be the reasonable course? Or should she follow what she was learning from the Bible and risk possible financial hardship as well as the scorn of some people? What would you have done if you had been in her place?

⁸ Feeling pressured and stressed, the young woman poured out her heart to Jehovah, seeking his direction. Talking to her Bible teacher and others in the congregation about the situation, she began to perceive Jehovah’s mind on the matter. She also weighed the potential emotional damage to little ones who during their formative years are separated

* Another reason behind the practice is that the grandparents can show off their grandchildren to friends and relatives.

4. We likely have received what advice when we faced a decision?

5. Why is it that by nature we do not have a perfectly sound mind?

6. What can help us to cultivate a sound mind?

7, 8. Relate an experience of how a sound decision can be made in spite of pressures or hardship.



When we make the right choices in daily matters, we train our perceptive powers
(See paragraph 11)

from their parents. After considering the matter in the light of the Scriptures, she concluded that it was not right to send the baby away. Her husband saw how the members of the congregation rallied to help and how happy and healthy the baby was turning out to be. He accepted a Bible study and commenced attending meetings with his wife.

⁹ That is just one case, but it illustrates that using the spirit of a sound mind does not mean just going by what we or others think or feel is reasonable or expedient. Our imperfect mind and heart can be like a watch that is going either too fast or too slow. Being guided by it could bring us serious trouble. (Jer. 17:9) We need to calibrate our mind and heart by God's reliable standards.—*Read Isaiah 55:8, 9.*

¹⁰ With good reason, the Bible admonishes us: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways

take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." (Prov. 3:5, 6) Note the expression "do not lean upon your own understanding." It is followed by "take notice of [Jehovah]." He is the One with a truly sound mind. Thus, it follows that whenever we are faced with a decision, we need to turn to the Bible to see what God's view is. Then we should base our decision on it. That is using the spirit of a sound mind—imitating Jehovah's mind.

TRAIN YOUR PERCEPTIVE POWERS

¹¹ Learning to make wise decisions and to carry them out does not come easily. This can be especially challenging for those new in the truth or those just starting to make progress toward spiritual maturity. However, genuine progress is possible for such spiritual babes, as the Bible refers to them. Consider how an infant learns to walk without falling. The key to success usually lies in his taking small steps and doing so re-

9, 10. What does it mean to use the spirit of a sound mind, and how can we do so?

11. What is a key to learning how to make wise decisions?

peatedly. The same is true with a spiritual babe when it comes to making wise decisions. Recall that the apostle Paul described mature people as “those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong.” The words “through use” and “trained” both imply making continuous and repeated effort, and that is what new ones need to do.—*Read Hebrews 5:13, 14.*

¹² As mentioned earlier, each day we must make numerous decisions, big and small. According to one study, over 40 percent of our actions are not based on deliberate forethought but are the result of ingrained habits. For example, every morning you probably have to decide what clothes to wear. You might view this as a small thing, and you make your choice without much deliberation, especially if you are in a hurry. But it is important to think about whether what you put on befits your role as a servant of Jehovah. (2 Cor. 6:3, 4) When you shop for clothes, you may think about styles and trends but what about modesty and cost? Making the right choices in these matters will contribute to training our perceptive powers, which can help us to make right decisions in weightier matters.—Luke 16:10; 1 Cor. 10:31.

CULTIVATE THE WILL TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT

¹³ We all know that making the right decision is one thing, but sticking to it and following through on it is quite another. For example, some who want to quit smoking fail because they lack

sufficient motivation. What is needed is the determination to follow the chosen course. Some believe that our willpower is very much like a muscle. The more we use it or exercise it, the stronger it becomes. If we seldom use it, it will weaken or wither. What, then, can help us to develop or strengthen our will to stick to and carry out the course we have decided on? Turning to Jehovah can help us.—*Read Philippians 2:13.*

¹⁴ Paul knew this from personal experience. He once lamented: “Ability to wish is present with me, but ability to work out what is fine is not present.” He knew what he wanted to do or what he should do, but at times something prevented him from carrying it out. He confessed: “I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within, but I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin’s law that is in my members.” Was his situation hopeless? By no means. He declared: “Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:18, 22-25) Elsewhere, he wrote: “For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me.”—Phil. 4:13.

¹⁵ Clearly, to please God, decisive action is needed. Recall Elijah’s words to the Baal worshippers and the apostate Israelites at Mount Carmel: “How long will you be limping upon two different opinions? If Jehovah is the true God, go following him; but if Baal is, go following him.” (1 Ki. 18:21) The sons of Israel knew what they ought to do, but they were “limping” with indecision. In sharp

12. How can we cultivate our ability to make wise decisions?

13. What is needed to make sure that we follow through on the decisions we have made?

14. Why did Paul have the strength to do what he knew he should do?

15. How may decisive action or the lack of it affect those involved?



Make wise decisions and find joy among God's people
(See paragraph 18)

contrast, years earlier, Joshua set a fine example when he told the Israelites: "If it is bad in your eyes to serve Jehovah, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve . . . As for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah." (Josh. 24:15) What resulted from his determined course? Joshua and those who stuck with him were blessed with settling in the Promised Land, "a land flowing with milk and honey."—Josh. 5:6.

MAKE WISE DECISIONS AND BE BLESSED

¹⁶ Consider a modern-day situation. A newly baptized brother is married, and he and his wife have three small children. One day, a workmate suggested that he and the brother move to another company that paid a higher wage and provided more benefits. Our brother thought and prayed about the mat-

ter. He had originally chosen his present job, which did not pay particularly well, in order to have the weekends off, allowing him to attend the meetings and be in the ministry with his family. He reflected on the reality that he would not have such a schedule if he took the new job—at least not for some time. What would you have done?

¹⁷ Weighing spiritual benefits against a higher income, the brother turned down the other job. Do you think that he came to regret the decision? Not at all. He felt that the spiritual blessings were far more beneficial for him and his family than a higher salary would be. He and his wife were elated when their eldest daughter, age ten, told them that she loved her parents, loved the brothers and sisters, and loved Jehovah very much. She said that she wanted to dedicate her life to Jehovah and get baptized. How much she must have appreciated her father's good example of putting Jehovah's worship first in his life!

¹⁸ The Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, has been leading true worshippers of Jehovah through the wilderness of Satan's world for many decades. As the Greater Joshua, Jesus is now poised to bring that corrupt system to its end and lead his followers to the promised new world of righteousness. (2 Pet. 3:13) Therefore, now is not the time to return to our former ways of thinking, our old habits, values, and aspirations. It is the time to perceive ever more clearly what God's will is for us. (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 13:5) Let the decisions and choices you make each day reflect that you are the sort of person who is worthy of God's eternal blessing.—*Read Hebrews 10:38, 39.*

16, 17. Illustrate the benefits that come from making decisions in harmony with God's will.

18. Why is it important that we make wise personal decisions each day?



PIONEERING STRENGTHENS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

*"It is good to make
melody to our God."*

—PS. 147:1.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How can pioneering strengthen
your relationship with Jehovah?

If you are a pioneer, what can
help you to continue in this
rewarding avenue of service?

If you are not now a pioneer,
what adjustments may help you
to join the pioneer ranks?

THINKING and speaking about a loved one can strengthen our bond with that person. The same is true regarding our relationship with Jehovah God. As a shepherd, David spent many a night gazing at the starry heavens and meditating on their incomparable Creator. He wrote: "When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared, what is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and the son of earthling man that you take care of him?" (Ps. 8:3, 4) And after considering how Jehovah's purpose with regard to spiritual Israel was being fulfilled in a marvelous way, the apostle Paul exclaimed: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge!"—Rom. 11:17-26, 33.

² As we share in the ministry, we think and talk about Jehovah. That in itself has positive effects. Many who are able to engage in the full-time ministry have found that one blessing that results from their increased share in Kingdom service is that it has deepened their love for God. Whether you are presently in the full-time service or you are working toward that goal, consider this: How can the full-time ministry strengthen your relationship with Jehovah? If you are a pioneer, ask yourself, 'What will help me to continue in this rewarding avenue of service?' If you are not yet pioneering, ask, 'What adjustments can I make to begin doing so?' Let us consider ways that full-time service can strengthen our relationship with God.

1, 2. (a) What can result from thinking and speaking about a loved one? (See opening image.) (b) What questions will we consider?

FULL-TIME SERVICE AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

³ *Discussing future Kingdom blessings with others draws us closer to Jehovah.* What scripture do you like to use when you go from house to house? Might your favorite be Psalm 37:10, 11; Daniel 2:44; John 5:28, 29; or Revelation 21:3, 4? Each time we discuss such promises with others, *we* are reminded that our generous God truly is the giver of “every good gift and every perfect present.” This draws us closer to him.—Jas. 1:17.

⁴ *Seeing the spiritually destitute condition of those to whom we preach deepens our appreciation for the truth.* People in the world have no reliable guidance to help them achieve success and happiness. Most worry about the future and have no hope. They search for the meaning of life. Even most who are religious have little knowledge of the Scriptures. They are much like the people of ancient Nineveh. (**Read Jonah 4:11.**) When we have an increased share in the ministry, we see more clearly the contrast between the spiritual condition of those to whom we preach and that of Jehovah’s people. (Isa. 65:13) We are reminded of Jehovah’s goodness in that he does more than provide for our spiritual needs; he invites all to receive spiritual refreshment and a real hope.—Rev. 22:17.

⁵ *Helping others spiritually makes it easier for us to avoid becoming overwhelmed by personal problems.* Trisha, a regular pioneer, found this to be true when her parents got divorced. She relates: “It was

one of the most emotionally upsetting events of my life.” One day when she was quite sad and felt like staying home, she nevertheless went to conduct a Bible study with three children whose home situation was very troubled. Their father had abandoned them, and their older brother had abused them. Trisha says: “Any problem or heartache I was dealing with was nothing compared to theirs. As we studied, their little eyes would light up and they would giggle with excitement and joy. Those children were a gift from Jehovah, especially that day.”

⁶ *Teaching Bible truths strengthens our faith.* The apostle Paul wrote of some Jews in his day who failed to practice what they preached: “Do you, . . . the one teaching someone else, not teach yourself?” (Rom. 2:21) How different it is with pioneers today! They generally have many opportunities to teach the truth to others and conduct Bible studies. To do so effectively requires that they prepare for each study and perhaps do research to answer questions. A pioneer named Janeen explains: “Each time I have an opportunity to teach the truth to others, I feel that a deeper impression of these truths is engraved on my mind and heart. As a result, my faith is not stagnant but continues to grow.”

⁷ *Observing Bible students improve their lives by applying Bible principles deepens our appreciation for God’s wisdom.* (Isa. 48:17, 18) That helps us, in turn, be more determined to continue applying these principles in our own life. Adriana, another pioneer, comments: “People’s lives can be a mess when they rely

3. In the ministry, how are we affected by speaking about future Kingdom blessings?

4. Why is our appreciation for God’s goodness deepened when we see the spiritually destitute condition of others?

5. How does helping others spiritually make us feel about our own problems?

6, 7. (a) How is our faith strengthened when we teach Bible truths? (b) As we observe Bible students improve their lives by applying Scriptural principles, what happens to our appreciation for God’s wisdom?

on their own wisdom. But when they start relying on Jehovah's wisdom, the benefits begin right away." Similarly, Phil states: "You see how Jehovah is able to change people who were unsuccessful when they tried to change on their own."

⁸ *Working alongside good associates in the ministry builds us up spiritually.* (Prov. 13:20) Most pioneers spend considerable time in the ministry with fellow evangelizers. This provides more opportunities for "an interchange of encouragement." (Rom. 1:12; *read Proverbs 27:17.*) A pioneer named Lisa observes: "In the workplace, there is often a spirit of competition and jealousy. Daily you are subjected to gossip and vulgar language. It's all about getting ahead at

any cost. At times, you are ridiculed or mocked because of your Christian conduct. However, working in the ministry with fellow Christians is truly uplifting. At the end of the day, I come home refreshed, no matter how tired I am."

⁹ *Pioneering with our marriage mate strengthens the threefold marital cord.* (Eccl. 4:12) Madeline, who pioneers along with her husband, explains: "My husband and I are able to spend time talking about our day in the ministry or something in our Bible reading that can be applied in our ministry. Each year that we pioneer together, we grow closer." Similarly, Trisha says: "We are both focused on not getting into debt, so we don't fight about money. We have the same service schedule, so we are very

8. How does working alongside good associates in the ministry affect us?

9. Pioneering with our marriage mate can do what for the threefold marital cord?

Being active in the full-time service makes for a satisfying life
(See paragraph 9)



involved in each other's return visits and Bible studies, which helps us to keep the same pace emotionally and spiritually."

¹⁰ *Our trust in Jehovah increases as we put Kingdom interests first, experience Jehovah's support, and see him answer our prayers.* To an extent, that is true of all loyal Christians. But those in the full-time service find that reliance on Jehovah can help them to remain as pioneers. (**Read Matthew 6:30-34.**) Curt, who is a pioneer and a substitute circuit overseer, agreed to visit a congregation two and a half hours from his home. He and his wife, also a pioneer, had barely enough gasoline in their car to make it to the congregation but not back, and his payday was a week away. Curt comments, "I began to question if I had made the right decision." After praying, they concluded that they would fulfill the assignment, confident that God would care for their needs. As they were about to leave, a sister called and said that she had a gift for them. It was the exact amount of money they needed to complete the trip. Curt says, "When you have experiences like this time and again, it is easy to see the hand of Jehovah."

¹¹ Yes, pioneers have often found that as they expend themselves in Jehovah's service and pursue intimacy with him, they are 'overtaken' by a seemingly endless stream of blessings. (Deut. 28:2) Still, pioneering has its challenges. No servant of God is immune to problems caused by Adam's rebellion. Though some pioneers have found that they have had to discontinue their service for a time, the challenges can often be man-

aged or even avoided. What may help pioneers to continue enjoying their privileged service?

REMAINING IN THE FULL-TIME SERVICE

¹² Most pioneers have a very full schedule. It can be a struggle to get everything done, so good personal organization is important. (1 Cor. 14:33, 40) If a pioneer is having difficulty reaching the hour goal, he might need to re-examine how he is using his time. (Eph. 5:15, 16) He might ask: 'How much time am I actually expending on recreation or leisure pursuits? Do I need to exercise greater self-discipline? Could I adjust my secular work schedule?' Any Christian will admit that it is easy to add things to one's schedule; thus, those in the full-time service may need to assess matters regularly and make adjustments if needed.

¹³ Daily Bible reading, personal study, and meditation ought to be part of a pioneer's schedule. Accordingly, a pioneer needs self-discipline so that less important activities do not encroach on the time he has set aside for those essential things. (Phil. 1:10) For example, picture him coming home after a long day in the ministry. He intends to use the evening to prepare for the upcoming meeting. First, though, he reads his mail. Then he turns on the computer and reads and answers e-mail. While he is online, he goes to a Web site to see if the price has gone down on an item he wants to purchase. Before he realizes it, almost two hours have gone by and he has not yet begun to study what he had in mind for that evening. Why is that an issue? Professional

10. When we put the Kingdom first and experience God's support, how is our trust in Jehovah affected?

11. What are some of the blessings that pioneers experience?

12, 13. (a) A pioneer should do what if he is having trouble reaching his hour goal? (b) Why is scheduling daily Bible reading, personal study, and meditation so important?

athletes must take care of their bodies if they want to have a long career. Similarly, pioneers need a good routine of personal study to replenish themselves spiritually if they are to persist in the full-time ministry.—1 Tim. 4:16.

¹⁴ Successful pioneers strive to keep their life simple. Jesus encouraged his disciples to have a simple eye. (Matt. 6: 22) He kept his own life simple so that he could accomplish his ministry without distraction. He could say: “Foxes have dens and birds of heaven have roosts, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay down his head.” (Matt. 8:20) Desiring to learn from Jesus’ example, a pioneer does well to keep in mind that the more material things he has, the more he will have to maintain, repair, or replace.

¹⁵ Pioneers realize that their privilege of service is not the result of any special merit on their part. Rather, any gift or service privilege that we might have is because of God’s undeserved kindness. Thus, in order to continue as a pioneer, each one must rely on Jehovah. (Phil. 4: 13) Challenges and difficulties will arise. (Ps. 34:19) When they do, pioneers should look to Jehovah for direction and give him the opportunity to help, rather than quickly giving up their privilege of service. (**Read Psalm 37:5.**) As they experience God’s loving assistance, they will be drawn closer to him as their caring heavenly Father.—Isa. 41:10.

CAN YOU JOIN THE PIONEER RANKS?

¹⁶ If you would like to experience blessings like the ones enjoyed by those

14, 15. (a) Why should pioneers keep their life simple? (b) If a pioneer experiences difficulties, what should he do?

16. If you would like to pioneer, what should you do?

in the full-time service, make your desire known to Jehovah. (1 John 5:14, 15) Talk to those who are currently pioneering. Set progressive goals toward becoming a pioneer. That is what Keith and Erika did. They had been working full-time and, like many couples their age, had bought a house and a new car soon after they got married. They say: “We thought those things would bring us satisfaction—but they never did.” When Keith got laid off from work, he served as an auxiliary pioneer. He recalls: “Pioneering reminded me of how much joy comes from being in the ministry.” They became friends with a pioneer couple who helped them to see the joy that results from leading a simple life and pioneering. What did Keith and Erika do? “We made a list of our spiritual goals, put it on our refrigerator, and checked each goal off as we reached it.” In time, they were able to pioneer.

¹⁷ Can you enter the pioneer ranks? If you do not at this point see how that is possible, do all you can to increase your closeness to Jehovah by having a full share in the ministry. After prayerful examination, you may find that making some adjustments in your schedule or lifestyle will allow you to pioneer. If you can pioneer, the joys you receive will far outweigh any sacrifices you will make. You will have increased satisfaction that comes from putting Kingdom interests ahead of your own. (Matt. 6:33) You will experience the increased happiness that comes from giving to others. Furthermore, you will have more opportunities to think and talk about Jehovah, deepening your love for him and bringing him pleasure.

17. Why would it be wise for you to consider adjusting your schedule or lifestyle in order to pioneer?

Why did Jesus give way to tears prior to the resurrection of Lazarus, as described at John 11:35?

■ When a loved one dies, we naturally shed tears because we will miss him. Though he had affection for Lazarus, Jesus did not give way to tears because Lazarus died. He shed tears out of compassion for the bereaved, as indicated by the context of John's account.—John 11:36.

When Jesus first heard that Lazarus was sick, he did not rush to Lazarus' bedside to cure him. The account says: "When [Jesus] heard that [Lazarus] was sick, then he actually remained two days in the place where he was." (John 11:6) Why did Jesus delay? He had a purpose in doing so. He said: "This sickness is not with death as its object, but is for the glory of God, in order that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (John 11:4) Death was not the "object," or end result, of Lazarus' sickness. Jesus intended to use Lazarus' death "for the glory of God." How? Jesus was about to perform a spectacular miracle by raising his dear friend from the grave.

In his discussion with his disciples on this occasion, Jesus compared death to a sleeplike state.

That is why he told them that he was "journeying there to awaken [Lazarus] from sleep." (John 11:11) To Jesus, raising Lazarus from death would be like a parent waking his child from a nap. So there was no reason for him to be pained over Lazarus' death itself.

What, then, moved Jesus to give way to tears? Again, the context provides the answer. When Jesus met Lazarus' sister Mary and saw her and others weeping, he "groaned in the spirit and became troubled." Seeing their pain moved Jesus to feel hurt to the point of 'groaning in the spirit.' That was why "Jesus gave way to tears." It greatly saddened Jesus to see his beloved friends stricken with grief.—John 11:33, 35.

This account demonstrates that Jesus has the power and ability to bring our loved ones back to life and health in the coming new world. It also helps us to appreciate that Jesus has fellow feeling for those who have lost loved ones to Adamic death. Another lesson we can learn from this account is that we should have compassion for those who are grieving over the death of their loved ones.

Jesus knew that he was going to resurrect Lazarus. Still, he gave way to tears, moved by his deep love and compassion for his friends. Likewise, our empathy may move us to "weep with people who weep." (Rom. 12:15) Expressing such grief does not indicate that a person lacks faith in the resurrection hope. How appropriate, then, that Jesus set an example of showing sympathy for the bereaved by sincerely shedding tears even though he was about to raise Lazarus.

