

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

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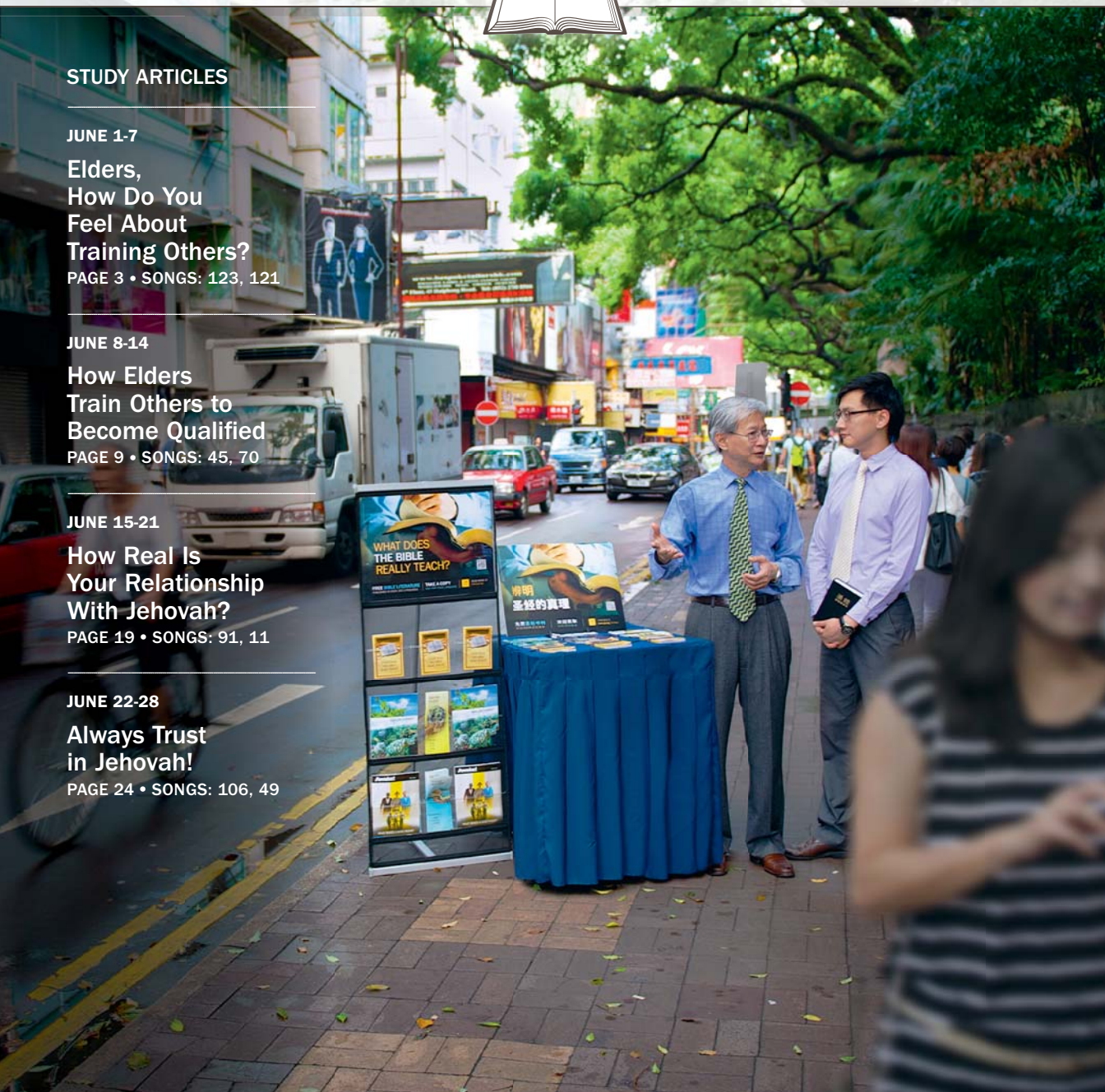
**How Real Is
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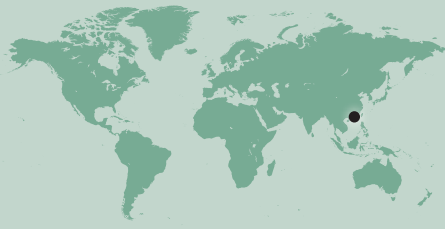
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HONG KONG

COVER: An elder trains a ministerial servant to do metropolitan witnessing on Haiphong Road, Kowloon

POPULATION

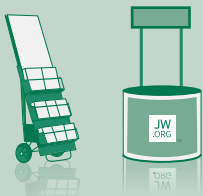
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STUDY ARTICLES

- **Elders, How Do You Feel About Training Others?**
- **How Elders Train Others to Become Qualified**

How important is it for elders to train less experienced brothers? What methods of training are successful? What can elders as well as those who receive training learn from Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha of old? The answers will be considered in these two articles.

- **How Real Is Your Relationship With Jehovah?**
- **Always Trust in Jehovah!**

A strong relationship with Jehovah will enable us to meet trials successfully. These two articles show us how we can strengthen our personal relationship with Jehovah by maintaining two-way communication with him and by trusting in him at all times.

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- 32 Can a Cut-Down Tree Sprout Again?



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Elders, How Do You Feel About Training Others?

"There is an appointed time for everything."

—ECCL. 3:1.

THE circuit overseer was about to conclude his meeting with the body of elders. As he looked at their faces, he felt warm affection for these hardworking shepherds, some of whom were old enough to be his father. Yet, he also felt concern, so he asked them, "Brothers, what have you done to train others to take on more responsibility in the congregation?" They well remembered that the circuit overseer during his last visit had urged them to pay more attention to training others. Finally, one of the elders said, "Frankly, we have done very little." The other elders nodded in agreement.

² If you are a Christian elder, can you relate to what took place at that meeting? Likely so. Circuit overseers around the world have noted that in many congregations, more needs to be done to train brothers—younger and older—to help care for the flock. This presents a challenge. Why is that the case?

1, 2. Circuit overseers have noted what situation in many congregations?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What priority should be given to training brothers, and why?

How does a congregation benefit from elders who give training?

In training others, how can elders imitate Samuel's example?

³ As a shepherd, you no doubt realize that personal training is important.* You know that more brothers are needed to keep existing congregations spiritually strong and to allow new congregations to be formed. **(Read Isaiah 60:22.)** You also know that God's Word urges you to "teach others." **(Read 2 Timothy 2:2.)** Even so, like the elders mentioned in the introduction, you may find it hard to do so. After you have taken care of family needs, job requirements, congregation responsibilities, and other urgent matters, there just seems to be no time left to train others in the congregation. That being the case, let us consider what importance should be given to the training of others.

TRAINING IS A PRIORITY

⁴ What could be one reason why some elders may find it hard to set aside time for training? Perhaps some think: 'Training is important, but it is not as urgent as other congregation matters that simply cannot wait. If I have to postpone training for a while, the congregation will continue to function.' Though it is true that numerous matters require your immediate attention, delaying training may harm the spiritual well-being of the congregation.

* This article and the next are written especially for the elders, although all in the congregation should be interested in what is presented. Why? It will encourage all baptized men to realize that training is needed in order for them to share the workload. And as that is accomplished, everyone will benefit.

3. (a) How do the Scriptures show the importance of training, and why should all of us be interested in this? (See footnote.) (b) Why may some elders find it hard to train others?

4. What might be one reason why training at times is postponed?

⁵ Think of this example: A driver may know that to maintain his car and keep the engine in running order, he must regularly change the oil. Still, he may feel that it is not as urgent as filling the tank with fuel. After all, if he does not put gas in the tank, his car will soon come to a complete stop. 'If I don't have time to change the oil,' he may reason, 'the engine will still keep running, at least for a while.' But what is the danger? If the driver keeps postponing the maintenance of the engine, the day will come when the car will grind to a complete halt. If that happens, he will have to spend a lot of time and money on getting the car repaired and running again. What is the lesson?

⁶ Elders care for many important tasks that have to be handled promptly; otherwise, the congregation would be adversely affected. So just as the driver in the example makes sure to keep refilling the fuel tank, elders must "make sure of the more important things." (Phil. 1:10) However, some elders are so busy looking after pressing matters that they may neglect the training of others—the maintenance of the engine, so to speak. But if elders keep postponing necessary training, sooner or later the congregation will lack sufficient qualified brothers to care for all that needs to be done.

⁷ Clearly, then, we should guard against thinking that training is of low priority. Elders who take a long-range

5, 6. What can we learn from the example of a driver and his view of engine maintenance, and how can this be applied to training given in the congregation?

7. How should we view elders who set aside time for training?

view and invest their time in training less experienced brothers are wise stewards and a true blessing to the entire congregation. **(Read 1 Peter 4:10.)** How does the congregation benefit?

A WISE INVESTMENT

⁸ Even the most experienced elders must modestly recognize that advancing age will gradually limit the amount of work they personally can do for the congregation. (Mic. 6:8) Also, they should realistically take into account that “time and unexpected events” may bring about a sudden change in their ability to care for congregation responsibilities. (Eccl. 9:11, 12; Jas. 4:13, 14) So out of heartfelt concern for the well-being of Jehovah’s sheep, forward-looking elders share in a timely fashion with younger brothers the experience they have acquired during their years of faithful service.—**Read Psalm 71:17, 18.**

⁹ For what other reason are elders who train others a blessing to the flock? They strengthen the congregation’s defenses. How? The efforts of elders to train others result in more brothers who will be ready to help the congregation to stand firm and united, not only now but especially when turbulent times come during the great tribulation. (Ezek. 38:10-12; Mic. 5:5, 6) Therefore, dear elders, we appeal to you to make training a regular feature of your ministry *today*.

8. (a) What qualities and considerations move elders to train others? (b) What urgent responsibility do elders who serve as “need greaters” have? (See the box “A Compelling Mission.”)

9. What future event makes training of vital importance?

¹⁰ Of course, we understand that the time you spend on caring for important congregation activities may already make you feel stretched to the limit. Hence, you may need to take some of that time and use it for training. (Eccl. 3:1) Doing so would be a wise investment.

CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

¹¹ Recently, a group of elders who are successful in helping brothers to grow spiritually were asked what approach they use when training others.* Though the circumstances of these brothers vary greatly, the advice they gave was strikingly similar. What does this indicate? That Bible-based training is applicable to learners “*everywhere in every congregation*”—just as it was in the apostle Paul’s day. (1 Cor. 4:17) Hence, in this article and the next, we will consider some suggestions that these elders made. (Prov. 15:22) For the sake of simplicity, the articles will refer to those giving training as “teachers” and those receiving it as “learners.”

¹² A teacher needs to create the right conditions for training. Just as a gardener needs to cultivate, or loosen, the soil before sowing seeds, so a teacher needs

* These elders live in Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, France, French Guiana, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Namibia, Nigeria, Réunion, Russia, South Africa, and the United States.

10. To have time to train others, what may an elder need to do?

11. (a) What is interesting about the suggestions on training given by elders from different lands? (b) According to Proverbs 15:22, why will it be beneficial to consider the suggestions of other elders?

12. What does a teacher need to create, and why?

to prepare, or encourage, the heart of a learner before teaching him new skills. So how do teachers create the right conditions for training others? By following an approach similar to that taken by one prophet of old. What approach is that?

¹³ One day over 3,000 years ago, Jehovah told the elderly prophet Samuel: “Tomorrow about this time, I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin. You must anoint him as leader over my people Israel.” (1 Sam. 9:15, 16) Samuel realized that his role as leader had come to an end and that Jehovah had assigned him to anoint a successor. ‘How can I prepare that man for his task?’ Samuel must have thought. He got an idea and worked out a plan.

¹⁴ The next day when Samuel saw Saul, Jehovah told the prophet: “Here is the man.” Then Samuel put his plan into action. He invited Saul for a meal in a dining hall. There he gave Saul and his attendant the best seats and a choice cut of meat, and Samuel said: “Eat, because they have reserved it for you for this occasion.” Afterward, Samuel and Saul walked down to the prophet’s house, talking as they went. Samuel wanted to make good use of the pleasant atmosphere that the fine meal and the leisurely walk had created. So he invited Saul to come up to his roof. In the cool evening breeze, Samuel “continued to speak with Saul on the housetop” until they went to sleep. The next day, Samuel anointed Saul, kissed him, and gave him more instructions. After that, he

13-15. (a) What assignment did the prophet Samuel receive? (b) How did Samuel carry out his task? (See opening image.) (c) Why should this Bible account about Samuel be of special interest to elders today?

sent Saul away—prepared for the events to come.—1 Sam. 9:17-27; 10:1.

¹⁵ Anointing a man to be a leader of a nation is, of course, not the same as training a brother to be an elder or a ministerial servant in the congregation. Even so, elders today can draw several valuable lessons from Samuel’s approach. Let us consider two of them.

WILLING TEACHERS AND TRUE FRIENDS

¹⁶ *Be willing, not reluctant.* When Samuel first heard that the Israelites wanted a human king, he felt disappointed and rejected by his people. (1 Sam. 8:4-8) In fact, he was so reluctant to do what the people demanded that Jehovah three times saw the need to tell him to listen to them. (1 Sam. 8:7, 9, 22) Even so, Samuel did not allow bitterness or resentment against the man who would replace him to take root in his heart. When Jehovah told him to anoint Saul, the prophet obeyed, not reluctantly out of mere duty, but willingly out of love.

¹⁷ Like Samuel, experienced elders today show a kind disposition toward those whom they train. (1 Pet. 5:2) Such elders do not hold back from training others for fear of having to relinquish certain congregation privileges to the learners. Bighearted teachers view willing learners, not as competitors, but as “fellow workers”—as precious gifts to

16. (a) What feelings did Samuel experience when Israel asked for a king? (b) With what disposition did Samuel fulfill his assignment to anoint Saul?

17. How do elders today imitate Samuel’s disposition, and what satisfaction does that give them?

Training others starts
with developing
a bond of friendship
(See paragraphs 18, 19)



the congregation. (2 Cor. 1:24; Heb. 13:16) And what satisfaction such unselfish teachers experience as they observe how the learners use their abilities to benefit the congregation!—Acts 20:35.

¹⁸ *Be a friend, not just a teacher.* The day Samuel met Saul, the prophet could have pulled out a flask of oil, hurriedly poured it on Saul’s head, and sent the new king on his way—fully anointed but totally unprepared. Instead, Samuel kindly took the time to prepare Saul’s heart step-by-step. Only after they had a fine meal, a pleasant stroll, a long talk, and a good rest did the prophet feel that the right moment had arrived to anoint Saul.

¹⁹ Likewise, a teacher today should start his training by taking time to develop a relaxed atmosphere and a bond of friendship with the learner. The specific steps an elder takes to create such a warm relationship will differ somewhat from land to land, depending on

local circumstances and customs. Yet, no matter where you live, if you as a busy elder set aside time to spend with a learner, you are telling him, in effect, “You are important to me.” (**Read Romans 12:10.**) That unspoken message will be clearly understood and deeply valued by willing learners everywhere.

²⁰ Elders, remember: A successful teacher is someone who not only loves to train another person but also loves the *person* he is training. (Compare John 5:20.) That crucial aspect of a teacher’s disposition is quickly discerned by a learner and greatly affects the way he responds to the training he receives. Therefore, dear elders, as you give training, be more than a teacher—be a friend. —Prov. 17:17; John 15:15.

²¹ After preparing a learner’s heart, an elder wants to convey to him the needed skills. What methods could the elder use? That will be considered in the following article.

18, 19. How can an elder prepare the heart of a learner, and why is taking that approach so important?

20, 21. (a) How would you describe a successful teacher? (b) What will be considered in the next article?

A Compelling Mission



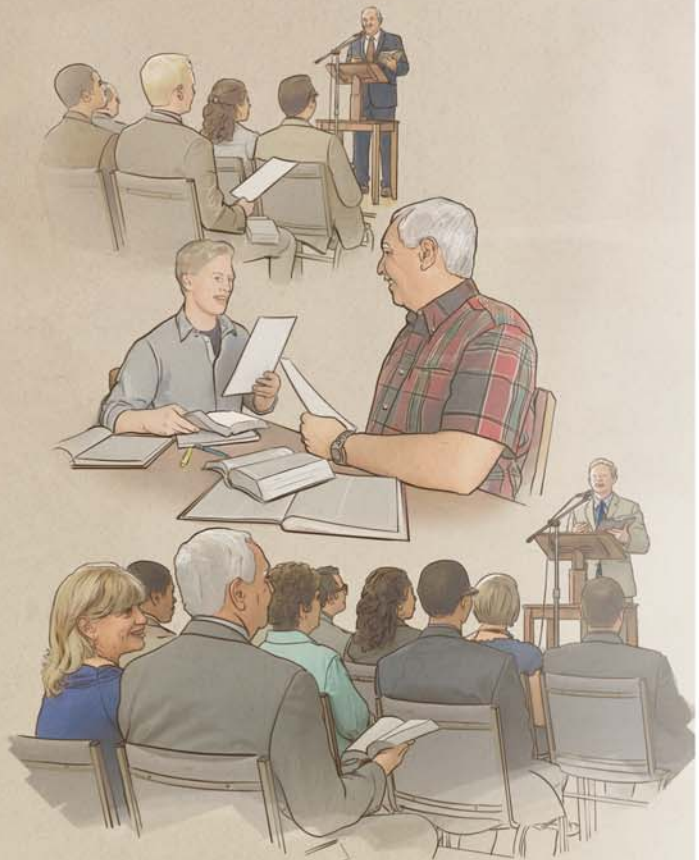
IN SOME parts of the world, numerous congregations receive much help in the form of “need greaters”—brothers and sisters who have moved in from abroad. These self-sacrificing Witnesses have a large share in bringing in the spiritual harvest. But what would happen if these hardworking Kingdom preachers were to leave the country? In many congregations, there would not be enough qualified local brothers to care for all the congregation responsibilities. Hence, “need greaters” serving as elders have a compelling mission—that of helping local brothers to become shepherds of the flock.

How to Train Others

ELDERS who are successful in training others offer these suggestions:

1. Be an example in word *and* deed.
2. Encourage the learner to deepen his spirituality by reading the Bible through in one year.
3. Work together in the field service.
(See image on cover.)
4. Teach him to conduct meaningful meetings for field service.
5. When you give a public talk, have him follow along in the outline so that he can see how you developed it. ►
6. Occasionally, invite him and his family to join you for your family worship.
7. Ask him and his family to go with you and your family to preach in unassigned or seldom-worked territory.*

* These suggestions were tried with good results by elders in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Europe.





How Elders Train Others to Become Qualified

“The things you heard from me . . . , entrust to faithful men.”—2 TIM. 2:2.

GOD’S servants have long understood that training contributes to success. The patriarch Abram “mobilized his *trained* men” to rescue Lot—and the men succeeded. (Gen. 14:14-16) In King David’s day, the singers for God’s house “were *trained* in song to Jehovah” and brought praise to God. (1 Chron. 25:7) Today, we are fighting a spiritual war against Satan and his followers. (Eph. 6:11-13) Also, we are exerting ourselves in our effort to bring praise to Jehovah. (Heb. 13:15, 16) Hence, like God’s servants in the past, to be successful we need to be *trained*. In the congregation, Jehovah entrusts the elders with the responsibility of training others. (2 Tim. 2:2) What methods are experienced elders using to train brothers to become qualified to care for the flock?

FORTIFY THE LEARNER SPIRITUALLY

² As an elder, you could be compared to a gardener. Before planting seeds, a gardener may see the need

1. (a) What have God’s servants long understood about training, and how does this apply today? (b) What will we consider in this article?
2. Before teaching a learner a set of skills, what may an elder want to do, and why?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

In what ways can an elder fortify a brother spiritually?

What scriptures may move a brother who seems to be disengaged to adjust his thinking?

How can those who are being trained imitate Elisha?

to add nutrients to the soil to make it more productive. Similarly, before teaching a less experienced brother a set of skills, you may discern the need to share some nourishing Scriptural thoughts with him so as to make his heart more responsive to the training he will receive.—1 Tim. 4:6.

³ To determine to what extent a learner's thoughts and actions are influenced by Kingdom truth, you might ask him, 'How has your dedication to Jehovah changed the way you use your life?' That question can lead to a meaningful conversation about what makes our sacred service whole-souled. **(Read Mark 12:29, 30.)** Perhaps at the end of such a conversation, you might say a prayer, asking Jehovah to give the learner the holy spirit he needs to complete his training. How upbuilding it will be for the brother to hear your heartfelt prayer in his behalf!

⁴ In the initial phase of training, consider some Bible accounts that might help the learner to see the need to be willing, reliable, and humble. (1 Ki. 19:19-21; Neh. 7:2; 13:13; Acts 18:24-26) Such qualities are as essential to the learner as nutrients are to the soil. They quicken his spiritual growth. Says Jean-Claude, an elder from France: "My main goal in training is to help a learner to become spiritually-minded. I look for occasions when we can read a specific scrip-

ture together to 'open the eyes' of the learner to 'the wonderful things' found in God's Word." (Ps. 119:18) What are some more ways to fortify a learner?

SUGGEST GOALS—GIVE REASONS

⁵ Ask a learner, 'What are your spiritual goals?' If he has no clear goals in mind, help him to set one that is reasonable and reachable. Tell him about a specific spiritual goal you once set for yourself, and relate with enthusiasm how much joy you felt when you reached it. Though this may seem like a simple method, it is effective. Victor, an elder and pioneer in Africa, recalls: "When I was young, an elder asked me a few well-chosen questions about my goals. Those questions helped me to start thinking seriously about my ministry." Experienced elders also stress the importance of beginning to train brothers when they are young—in their early teens—by giving them assignments in the congregation that fit their age. Such early training will help young ones to keep their eyes on spiritual goals when they reach the late teens and are bombarded with many distractions.—**Read Psalm 71:5, 17.***

⁶ You will also stimulate a learner's desire to serve by explaining to him not

* If a young man demonstrates Christian maturity, is humble, and meets the other Scriptural qualifications, the elders might recommend him for appointment as a ministerial servant even if he is not yet 20 years old.—1 Tim. 3:8-10, 12; see the July 1, 1989, issue of *The Watchtower*, page 29.

3. (a) How might Jesus' words found at Mark 12:29, 30 be used in a conversation with a learner? (b) What effect may a prayer said by an elder have on the learner?

4. (a) Give examples of Bible accounts that stimulate a learner's spiritual development. (b) What goal do elders have in mind when training others?

5. (a) How important is it to speak with a learner about spiritual goals? (b) Why should elders train those who are still young? (See footnote.)

6. What was an important aspect of Jesus' way of training others?

Explain why a task needs to be done, and give commendation for the effort that is put forth to accomplish it
(See paragraphs 5-8)



only *what* to do but also *why* to do it. By giving reasons, you imitate the Great Teacher, Jesus. For example, before giving his apostles the commission to make disciples, Jesus gave them a reason *why* they should obey. He stated: “All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth.” Then he added: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of people of all the nations.” (Matt. 28:18, 19) How can you imitate Jesus’ way of training?

⁷ Explain to a learner what the Scriptural reason is for what he is asked to do. In that way you teach him to think in terms of Bible principles. For example, suppose you ask a brother to keep the entranceway to the Kingdom Hall clean in appearance and safe for walking. You could consider Titus 2:10 and explain how his work to enhance the Kingdom Hall will “adorn the teaching of our Savior, God.” Also, ask the learner to think of the elderly ones in the congregation and how carrying out his assignment will benefit them. Having such conversations with the learner as part of his

7, 8. (a) How can elders today imitate Jesus’ way of training? (b) How important is it to commend a learner? (c) What suggestions can help elders to train others? (See the box “How to Train Others.”)

training will help him to focus more on people than on rules. He will experience the joy that comes from seeing how brothers and sisters in the congregation benefit from the service he renders.

⁸ Further, make sure to commend the learner for the effort he makes to apply your suggestions. How important is it to do that? Sincere commendation does for a learner what water does for a plant—it makes him thrive.—Compare Matthew 3:17.

AN ADDED CHALLENGE

⁹ Elders in affluent lands may face an added challenge: how to motivate baptized brothers in their 20’s or 30’s to get involved in congregation activities. We asked experienced elders in some 20 Western lands to tell us why they think some young brothers shy away from accepting congregation privileges. Among the answers received, one stands out: While they were growing up, some young ones were not encouraged to pursue spiritual goals. In fact, in some cases, young ones who

9. (a) With regard to training, what challenge faces some elders in affluent lands? (b) Why has the truth not come first in the life of some younger brothers?

were inclined to set such goals were encouraged by their parents to pursue secular goals instead! The truth never came first in the life of such young ones. —Matt. 10:24.

¹⁰ If a brother appears to be disengaged, changing the direction of his thinking will take much effort and patience, but it can be done. Just as a gardener can direct the growth of some plants by gradually straightening their stems, you can gradually help some brothers to see the need to change their attitude toward accepting privileges. But how?

¹¹ Take time to develop a friendly relationship with the brother. Let him know that he is needed in the congregation. Then, over the course of time, sit down with him to reason on specific scriptures and help him think about his dedication to Jehovah. (Eccl. 5:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 6:24, 33; Luke 9:57-62; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 5:15; 13:5) You might ask him, ‘What did you promise Jehovah when you dedicated yourself to him?’ Try to stir his heart by asking, ‘How do you think Jehovah must have felt when you got baptized?’ (Prov. 27:11) ‘What were Satan’s feelings?’ (1 Pet. 5:8) Never underestimate how deeply a brother can be affected by the reading of carefully selected Bible passages.—**Read Hebrews 4:12.***

* You might use in your discussion the points found in *The Watchtower*, April 15, 2012, pages 14-16, paragraphs 8-13; and “*Keep Yourself in God’s Love*,” chapter 16, paragraphs 1-3.

10, 11. (a) How may an elder gradually help a brother who appears to be disengaged to change his mind-set? (b) What Scriptural thoughts could an elder consider with such a brother, and why? (See footnote.)

LEARNERS, PROVE FAITHFUL

¹² What, though, about you young ones whose help is needed? What disposition will help you to succeed? To answer, let us consider some events in the life of a learner in the past.

¹³ Nearly 3,000 years ago, the prophet Elijah invited young Elisha to become his attendant. Elisha promptly accepted the invitation and faithfully served the older man by caring for humble tasks. (2 Ki. 3:11) Then, after some six years of training, Elisha learned that Elijah’s work in Israel was about to come to an end. At that point, Elijah urged his well-trained companion to stop following him, but Elisha three times told Elijah: “I will not leave you.” He was determined to stay with his mentor as long as possible. Jehovah, in turn, rewarded Elisha for his loyalty and faithfulness by letting him witness Elijah’s awe-inspiring departure.—2 Ki. 2:1-12.

¹⁴ How can you imitate Elisha today? Promptly accept assignments, including humble tasks. View your teacher as a friend, and let him know how much you appreciate the effort he makes in your behalf. The way you respond may, in effect, tell him: “I will not leave you.” Above all, be faithful in carrying out any assignment you are given. Why is this so important? Because only after you demonstrate that you are faithful and reliable will the elders feel assured that Jehovah wants you to be entrusted with

12, 13. (a) What disposition did Elisha show as a learner? (b) How did Jehovah reward Elisha for his faithfulness?

14. (a) How can learners today imitate Elisha? (b) Why is it so important for a learner to be faithful?

added responsibilities in the congregation.—Ps. 101:6; **read 2 Timothy 2:2.**

SHOW DUE RESPECT

¹⁵ The account of Elijah’s successor, Elisha, also indicates how brothers today can show due respect for experienced elders. After Elijah and Elisha had visited a group of prophets in Jericho, the two men walked to the Jordan River. There, “Elijah took his official garment and rolled it up and struck the waters, and they were divided.” After crossing the dry riverbed, the men kept on “speaking as they walked.” Clearly, Elisha did not think that by now he knew it all. Until the moment Elijah left, Elisha took to heart each word spoken by his teacher. Then Elijah ascended in a windstorm. Later, back at the Jordan, Elisha struck the waters with Elijah’s garment, calling out: “Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?” Again, the waters were divided.—2 Ki. 2:8-14.

¹⁶ Did you note that the first miracle performed by Elisha was an exact copy of the last miracle performed by Elijah? Why is that of interest? Apparently, Elisha did not feel that since *he* was now at the helm, he needed to change course right away. Instead, by continuing in the way that Elijah had carried out his ministry, Elisha showed due respect for his teacher, which reassured Elisha’s fellow prophets. (2 Ki. 2:15) Later, though, during Elisha’s 60-year-long ministry as a prophet, Jehovah moved him to perform many more miracles than Elijah

ever did. What is the lesson for you as a learner today?

¹⁷ Do not feel that as soon as you receive some responsibility in the congregation, you need to use it to change course—to do things in a way that is completely different from the way they were done before. The need for change is determined, not by your desire for change, but by the needs of the congregation and the direction we receive from Jehovah’s organization. Just as Elisha by his actions reassured his fellow prophets and showed respect for his predecessor by continuing to use Elijah’s methods, you may reassure your fellow believers and show respect for experienced elders by continuing to use their Bible-based methods. (**Read 1 Corinthians 4:17.**) However, as you gain experience, you will no doubt share in applying changes that will help the congregation to stay in tune with Jehovah’s progressive organization. In fact, as in Elisha’s case, Jehovah may in time move you faithful learners to do even greater works than those of your teachers.—John 14:12.

¹⁸ It is hoped that the suggestions in this article and the preceding one will move more elders to set aside time for training others. May qualified brothers eagerly accept such training and then use it wisely as they help take care of Jehovah’s sheep. Doing so will fortify the congregations worldwide and help each one of us to stay faithful during the momentous events to come.

15, 16. (a) In what ways did Elisha show respect for his teacher? (See opening image.) (b) What was it about Elisha that reassured his fellow prophets?

17. (a) How can learners today imitate Elisha’s disposition? (b) In time, how may Jehovah use faithful learners?

18. Why is the training of brothers in the congregations of high priority today?

Blessings “in Favorable Times and Difficult Times”

AS TOLD BY TROPHIM R. NSOMBA



WHEN I came into the world in March 1930, I was surrounded by relatives and friends who were faithfully serving Jehovah. That was in the village of Namkumba, near the city of Lilongwe, in the country that is now Malawi. In 1942, I dedicated my life to God and was baptized in one of our scenic rivers. Over the next 70 years, I endeavored to do just as the apostle Paul urged Timothy, to “preach the word; be at it urgently in favorable times and difficult times.”—2 Tim. 4:2.

The first visit of Nathan H. Knorr and Milton G. Henschel to Malawi in early 1948 kindled my desire to serve Jehovah full-time. I remember with fondness the encouraging comments of those representatives from the world headquarters of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. Standing in a muddy field, some 6,000 of us listened attentively to Brother Knorr’s encouraging talk, “Permanent Governor of All Nations.”

When I met Lidasi, a lovely sister who, like me, had been raised in a family of Jehovah’s Witnesses, I learned that she too had the goal of the full-time ministry. In 1950 we got married, and by 1953 we had two children. Even with the add-

ed responsibility of rearing them, we decided that I would be able to begin regular pioneering. Two years later, I was invited to serve as a special pioneer.

Soon thereafter, I was given the privilege of visiting congregations as a circuit overseer. Because of Lidasi’s fine support, I was able to care for our family materially and spiritually while doing this work.* But it was our earnest desire that both of us could be in the full-time ministry. By careful planning and with cooperation from our children, Lidasi was able to begin her full-time service in 1960.

We enjoyed those favorable times, serving our brothers and sisters in various congregations. Our assignments took us from the beautiful slopes of the Mulanje Mountains in the south to the peaceful shores of Lake Malawi, which runs nearly the full length of the eastern part of the country. We saw steady increases in publishers and congregations in the circuits we served.

In 1962 we enjoyed the “Courageous Ministers” District Assembly. In retrospect, such spir-

* Brothers who have minor children at home are no longer invited to serve in the circuit work.

itual occasions were just what all of us in Malawi needed to prepare us for the difficult times that lay ahead. The following year, Brother Henschel visited Malawi again and a special convention outside the city of Blantyre was attended by some 10,000. That encouraging convention served as a strengthening aid for us to face the coming trials.

DIFFICULT TIMES ARRIVE

In 1964 the Witnesses experienced severe testing because of their refusal to take part in political activities. Over 100 Kingdom Halls and more than 1,000 homes of Witnesses were destroyed in a wave of persecution. We, though, were able to continue in the traveling work until the Malawi government banned the Witnesses in 1967. The branch property in Blantyre was confiscated, the missionaries were deported, and many local Witnesses, including Lidasi and me, were put in jail. After our release, we discreetly continued in the traveling work.

One day in October 1972, some one hundred members of a militant political movement known as the Malawi Youth League headed for our house. But one of their members ran ahead and told me to hide because they were planning to kill me. I told my wife and children to hide among the nearby banana trees. Then I ran

and climbed a large mango tree. From there, I watched as our house and all our personal belongings were destroyed.

As the persecution intensified in Malawi, thousands of us fled the country. Our family stayed in a refugee camp in western Mozambique until June 1974. At that time, Lidasi and I were asked to serve as special pioneers in Dómue, Mozambique, near the Malawi border. We continued in that service until 1975, when Mozambique gained its independence from Portugal. Then, along with other Witnesses, we were forced to return to Malawi and to the persecutors we had left behind.

After returning to Malawi, I was assigned to visit congregations in the capital city, Lilongwe. In spite of the persecution and all the difficulties, the number of congregations increased in the circuits we were privileged to serve.

EXPERIENCING JEHOVAH'S SUPPORT

On one occasion, we came to a village where a political meeting was in progress. Some of the party supporters found out that we were Jehovah's Witnesses, and they made us sit among members of a political youth movement known as Malawi Young Pioneers. We fervently prayed to Jehovah for his help and guidance in this volatile situation. When the meeting ended, they

Assemblies strengthened us
for the persecution ahead



Because our brothers would not get involved in politics, their homes were burned



Political party card



started to beat us. An older woman came running and cried out: "Leave them alone, please! This man is my brother's son. Let him go on his journey!" The one in charge of the meeting said: "Let them go!" We are not sure what that woman had in mind, since she was not a relative of ours. We feel that Jehovah must have heard our prayer.

In 1981 we again met some of the Malawi Young Pioneers. They took away our bicycles, luggage, cartons of books, and circuit files. We escaped and ran to the home of an elder. Again we prayed about the situation. We were concerned about all the information in the files they had taken from us. When the Young Pioneers looked in the files, they saw letters addressed to me from locations all over Malawi. This terrified them, as they thought I was a government official. So they immediately returned everything to the local elders just as they had found it.

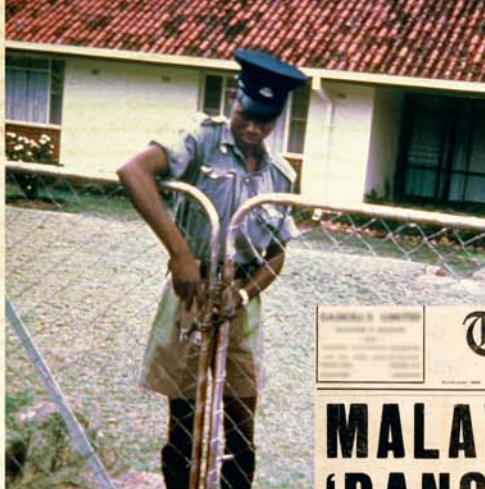
Another time, we were crossing a river in a boat. The owner of the boat was the political chairman of the area, so he decided to check all the passengers for political party cards. As he was approaching us, he discovered a thief whom the authorities were looking for. This caused quite a commotion, and that ended the search for party cards. Again we felt Jehovah's loving support.

ARRESTED AND IMPRISONED

In February 1984, I was on my way to Lilongwe to deliver reports for the branch office in Zambia. A policeman stopped me and searched my bag. He found some Bible literature, so he took me to the police station and started to beat me. Then he bound me with ropes and put me in a room with prisoners who had been caught with stolen goods in their possession.

The next day, the chief of police took me to another room, where he wrote out a statement that said: "I, Trophim R. Nsomba, have stopped being a Jehovah's Witness so that I can be set free." I responded: "I am ready not only to be bound but also to die. I am still a Witness of Jehovah." I refused to sign it. That angered the police chief, and he slammed his fist on the desk so hard that it caused a policeman in the next room to come running to see what had happened. The chief told him: "This man is refusing to sign that he has stopped witnessing. So let him sign that he is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and we shall send him to Lilongwe to be bound." All this time, my dear wife was wondering what was happening to me. Four days later, some brothers were able to tell her where I was.

At the Lilongwe police station, I was treated kindly. The chief of police said: "Here is a plate of rice because you have been bound on ac-



The work was banned, and the government confiscated the branch property



Brothers being led away after their trial

count of God's Word. The other people here are thieves." Then he sent me to Kachere Prison, where I was kept for five months.

The warden of that prison was happy that I came; he wanted me to be the "pastor" for the prison. He removed the current pastor, telling him: "I don't want you to teach God's Word here again, for you were put in prison because you stole from your church!" So I was given the responsibility of teaching the Bible each week at the meetings that were arranged for the prisoners.

Later, things changed for the worse. Prison officials interrogated me to find out how many Witnesses there were in Malawi. When I didn't answer them to their satisfaction, they beat me until I passed out. Another time, they wanted to know where our headquarters was located. I said, "You have asked a simple question, and I will tell you." The policemen were happy and turned on their tape recorder. I explained that the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses is described in the Bible. They were surprised, and asked, "Where in the Bible?"

"At Isaiah 43:12," I replied. They looked it up and read it carefully: "'You are my witnesses,' declares Jehovah, 'and I am God.'" They read that passage three times. Then they asked: "How can the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses be here in the Bible and not in America?" I told them: "Je-

hovah's Witnesses in America also see this scripture as describing their headquarters." Since I would not tell them what they wanted to hear, I was transferred to Dzaleka Prison, just north of Lilongwe.

BLESSINGS EVEN IN DIFFICULT TIMES

In July 1984, I joined the 81 Witnesses at Dzaleka Prison. There, 300 prisoners were crowded together, sleeping on the floor shoulder to shoulder. Gradually, we Witnesses were able to divide ourselves into small groups to consider a scripture each day, which different ones would suggest. That gave us much encouragement.

Then the prison warden separated us from the other prisoners. A guard secretly told us: "The government doesn't hate you. We keep you in prison for two reasons: The government fears that you will be killed by the Young Pioneers, and because you preach about a coming war, the government fears that their soldiers will disappear during that war."

In October 1984, all of us had to appear in court. We each received a two-year prison sentence. As before, we were put in with non-Witnesses. But the prison warden announced to all: "Jehovah's Witnesses don't smoke cigarettes. So guards, don't trouble them by asking them for a cigarette and don't send them to collect a burning piece of charcoal to light your cigarette. They

are God's people! All of Jehovah's Witnesses should be given food twice a day, since they are not here for crimes but because of their beliefs in the Bible."

We benefited from our fine reputation in other ways as well. When it was dark or rainy, prisoners were not allowed to move about. But we were permitted to leave the building whenever we wanted to. They knew we would not try to escape. In fact, once when a guard fell ill while watching us as we worked in the fields, we carried him back to the prison compound for treatment. The prison officials knew that we could be trusted. So by maintaining our fine conduct, we were blessed to see Jehovah's name glorified through the mouth of our captors.—1 Pet. 2:12.*

A FAVORABLE TIME IS HERE AGAIN

On May 11, 1985, I was released from Dzaleka Prison. What a joy it was to be reunited with my family! We thank Jehovah for helping us to maintain our integrity in those very difficult times. Regarding that period, we feel like the apostle Paul when he wrote: "We do not want you to be

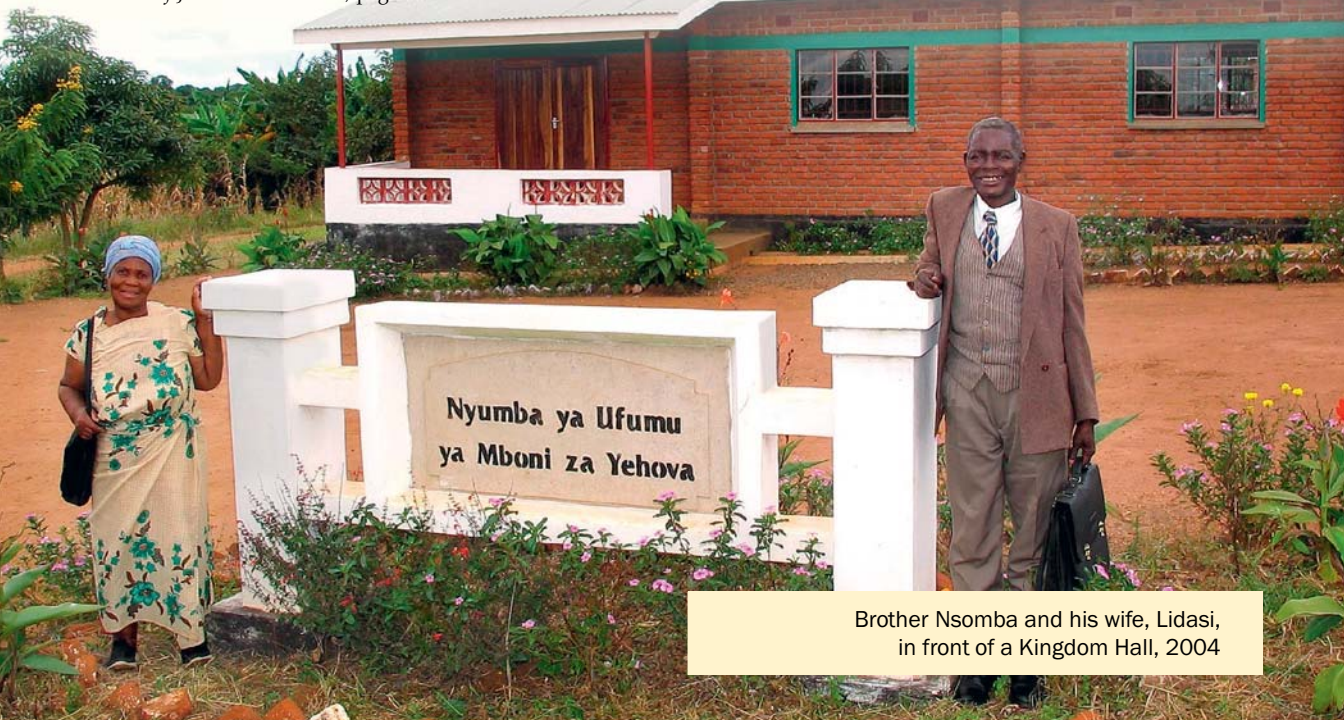
unaware, brothers, of the tribulation we experienced . . . We were very uncertain even of our lives. In fact, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. This was so that we would trust, not in ourselves, but in the God who raises up the dead. From such a great risk of death he did rescue us."—2 Cor. 1:8-10.

Indeed, at times it seemed that we would not survive. But we always asked Jehovah to give us the courage and wisdom to help us keep a humble spirit so that we could continue to bring glory to his great name.

Jehovah has blessed us in his service, during favorable times as well as difficult ones. Now, what a thrill it is for us to see the branch office that was completed in Lilongwe in the year 2000, as well as the construction of over 1,000 new Kingdom Halls all throughout Malawi! These blessings from Jehovah are so enriching spiritually that to Lidasi and me, it almost seems like a dream!*

* While this article was being prepared for publication, Brother Nsomba fell asleep in death at the age of 83.

* For the details of the persecution in Malawi, see the 1999 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 171-223.



Brother Nsomba and his wife, Lidasi,
in front of a Kingdom Hall, 2004



How Real Is Your Relationship With Jehovah?

“Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.”

—JAS. 4:8.

ARE you a dedicated, baptized Witness of Jehovah? If so, you have a precious possession—a personal relationship with God. However, that relationship is under attack by pressures not only from Satan’s world but also from our own imperfect flesh. This trying situation faces all Christians. Therefore, our relationship with Jehovah must be as strong as possible.

² How real to you is your personal relationship with Jehovah? Would you like to strengthen it? James 4:8 tells you how you can do that: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” Note that this is a two-way process.* As we take steps to draw close to God, he takes reciprocating action toward us. This interaction, frequently repeated, progressively strengthens our relationship with Jehovah. As a result, that relationship becomes very real to us. We develop the kind of

* A relationship has been defined as the way two individuals feel and behave toward each other. Thus, both are actively involved.

1. Why do we need to keep our relationship with Jehovah strong?
2. (a) What is a relationship? (See footnote.) (b) How can we strengthen our relationship with Jehovah?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What should be your objective when you study God’s Word?

What assures you that Jehovah always does what is right?

Why should you be specific in your prayers?

confidence Jesus had when he said: “The One who sent me is *real*, and . . . I *know him*.” (John 7:28, 29) Specifically, though, what steps can you take to draw closer to Jehovah?

³ Having regular communication with Jehovah is a vital part of drawing close to him. How can you communicate with God? Well, how do you communicate with a friend who lives far away? Likely, you write to each other and talk on the phone, perhaps quite often. You talk to Jehovah by means of your frequent *prayers to him*. (**Read Psalm 142:2.**) And you allow Jehovah to

3. What makes communication with Jehovah possible?

How can you communicate with God?
(See paragraph 3)

talk to you, as it were, when you regularly *read his written Word and meditate on it*. (**Read Isaiah 30:20, 21.**) Let us consider, then, how this two-way communication strengthens our bond with Jehovah, making our personal relationship with him ever more real.

BIBLE STUDY —JEHOVAH SPEAKS TO YOU

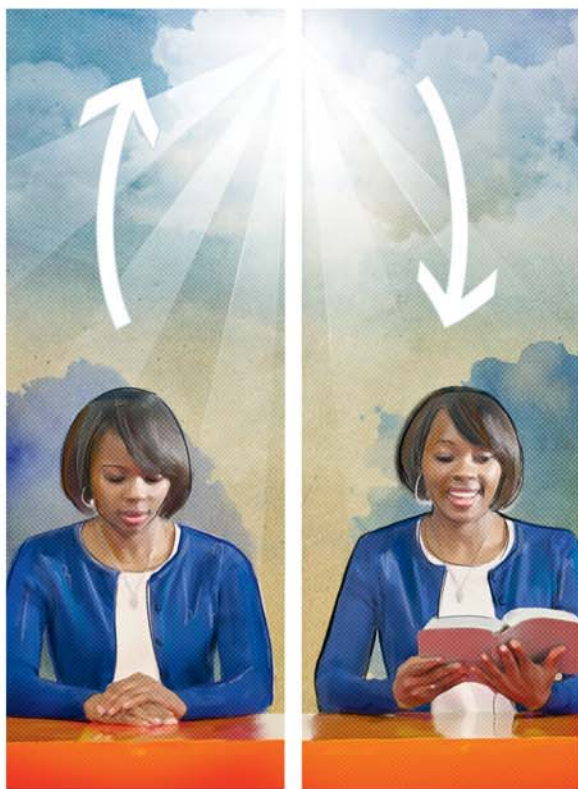
⁴ You no doubt agree that the Bible contains God’s message for mankind in general. But does the Bible also convey how *you* in particular can draw closer to Jehovah? Indeed it does. How? As you regularly read and study the Bible, consider your response to what it says and give thought to how you can apply it to your circumstances; then you are allowing Jehovah to talk to you through his Word. This draws you into a closer relationship with him.—Heb. 4:12; Jas. 1:23-25.

⁵ For example, read and meditate on Jesus’ words to “stop storing up for yourselves treasures on the earth.” If you feel that you are already focusing your life on Kingdom interests, you sense Jehovah’s commendation. On the other hand, if you see a need to simplify your life and to focus more on Kingdom interests, Jehovah has alerted you to an area where *you* can work at drawing closer to him.—Matt. 6:19, 20.

⁶ Studying the Scriptures does more than reveal areas in which we can improve spiritually. It also deepens our ap-

4, 5. How does Jehovah communicate with you personally through his written Word? Give an example.

6, 7. (a) How does Bible study affect our love for Jehovah and his love for us? (b) What should be our objective when engaging in personal study?



preciation for Jehovah's endearing ways, causing us to love him even more. And when our love for God grows, his love for us intensifies, thus strengthening our bond with him.—**Read 1 Corinthians 8:3.**

⁷ For us to draw close to Jehovah, however, it is essential that we study with the right objective. John 17:3 says: "This means everlasting life, their coming to *know* you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ." Thus, our objective should be not merely to take in knowledge but to come to "know" Jehovah better as a Person.—**Read Exodus 33:13; Ps. 25:4.**

⁸ As we come to know Jehovah more intimately, we will not be unduly disturbed if certain Bible accounts leave us wondering why he acted as he did. For example, how do you respond to the way Jehovah acted toward King Azariah of Judah? (2 Ki. 15:1-5) Note that although "the people were still sacrificing and making sacrificial smoke on the high places," Azariah himself "continued to do what was right in Jehovah's eyes." Yet, "Jehovah afflicted the king, and he remained a leper until the day of his death." Why? The account does not say. Should this disturb us or cause us to wonder whether Jehovah punished Azariah without due cause? Not if we have an intimate knowledge of Jehovah's ways. That would include knowing that Jehovah always disciplines "to the proper degree." (Jer. 30:11) Such knowledge assures us that even if we do not know why Jehovah acted as he did to-

ward Azariah, we can trust that His judgment was righteous.

⁹ In this case, however, additional details are available to us elsewhere in the Bible. King Azariah was also known as King Uzziah. (2 Ki. 15:7, 32) In the parallel account at 2 Chronicles 26:3-5, 16-21, we learn that although Uzziah did what was right in Jehovah's eyes for a time, later in life "his heart became haughty to his own ruin." Presumptuously, he attempted to perform priestly duties that were outside the scope of his authority. Eighty-one priests confronted him and endeavored to correct him. How did Uzziah respond? He demonstrated how proud he had become. He "became enraged" against the priests. No wonder Jehovah struck him with leprosy!

¹⁰ Let us not miss the point. Suppose clarifying details had not been included in God's Word, as is the case with other abbreviated Bible accounts? Would you be inclined to question the righteousness of God? Or would you reason that the Bible contains enough information to assure us that Jehovah always does what is right and is, in fact, the very standard of what is right and what is wrong? (Deut. 32:4) As we get to know Jehovah better as a Person, our love and appreciation for his ways will grow to the point that we do not need an explanation for everything he does. Be assured that such appreciation will grow in proportion to your efforts to study and meditate on God's communication

8. (a) What concern could arise regarding Jehovah's treatment of King Azariah, as described at 2 Kings 15:1-5? (b) How does our knowing Jehovah remove any doubt about his actions?

9. What facts shed light on Jehovah's reasons for afflicting Azariah with leprosy?

10. Why should we not always need an explanation for Jehovah's actions, and how can we strengthen our confidence in Jehovah's righteous ways?



SCHOOL YEARS

FULL-TIME MINISTRY

through his written Word. (Ps. 77:12, 13) This, in turn, will strengthen your relationship with Jehovah, making it ever more real.

PRAYER —YOU SPEAK TO JEHOVAH

¹¹ In prayer we draw close to Jehovah. We praise him, thank him, and seek his guidance. (Ps. 32:8) But for your relationship with Jehovah to be real, you must be convinced that he is hearing prayers.

¹² Some people believe that prayer is only of psychological benefit. They claim that if you think that your prayer is answered, it is merely because you put your thoughts into words, identified your problem, and set your mind on finding a solution. Aside from any such benefits, how do you know that your sincere prayers are actually heard by Jehovah?

¹³ Consider this: From his prehuman existence, Jesus observed firsthand Jehovah's response to the prayers of His

11-13. How do you know that Jehovah is listening to prayers? (See opening image.)

human servants. Then, during his earthly ministry, Jesus used prayer as his means of communicating his feelings to his Father in heaven. Would he have done so—even spending an entire night in prayer—had he thought that Jehovah was not really listening? (Luke 6:12; 22:40-46) Would he have taught his disciples to pray had he thought that prayer was nothing more than a psychological crutch? Clearly, Jesus knew that prayer is real communication with Jehovah. On one occasion, Jesus said: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. True, I knew that you always hear me." We too can have confidence that Jehovah is the "Hearer of prayer."—John 11:41, 42; Ps. 65:2.

¹⁴ When you are specific in your prayers, you become more keenly aware of Jehovah's answers, even though they may be subtle. Answered prayers will make Jehovah more real to you. In addition,

14, 15. (a) How do we benefit from being specific in our prayers? (b) How did one sister's prayers help her strengthen her bond with Jehovah?



MARRIED LIFE

PRESENT-DAY TRIALS

tion, the more you express your innermost concerns to Jehovah, the closer he will draw to you.

¹⁵ Consider the experience of Kathy.* She did not enjoy the field ministry, although she regularly participated in it. She explains: “I did not like field service. I mean, I *really* did not like it. When I retired from my secular work, an elder expressed the hope that I would become a regular pioneer; he even handed me an application form. I decided to pioneer, but I also began to pray daily that Jehovah would make me like field service.” Did Jehovah answer her prayers? She says: “I am now in my third year of pioneering. As a result of spending more time in the ministry and learning from other sisters, I have gradually improved in my ability to witness. Today, I do not *like* field service—I *love* it. What is more, my relationship with Jehovah is so much closer than it used to be.” Truly, Kathy’s prayers helped her to make her relationship with Jehovah real.

* Name has been changed.

DOING OUR PART

¹⁶ Developing a closer relationship with Jehovah is a lifetime pursuit. We must take steps to draw close to God if we want him to take corresponding action toward us. By all means, then, let us remain in regular communication with our God by means of Bible study and prayer. As a result, our ever-growing relationship with Jehovah will enable us to meet our trials successfully.

¹⁷ A special challenge may arise, however, when personal problems persist despite our earnest prayers. At such times, our trust in Jehovah may falter. We may begin to wonder if Jehovah really hears our prayers or if he even considers himself to be in a relationship with us. How can we handle such experiences with confidence that our relationship with God is real? The next article will address this concern.

16, 17. (a) What must we do to keep our relationship with Jehovah alive and growing? (b) What special challenge will be considered in the next article?



Always Trust in Jehovah!

“Trust in him at all times, O people.”—PS. 62:8.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why does Jehovah not always answer prayers immediately?

What comfort do you draw from Jehovah’s promise found at 1 Corinthians 10:13?

What activities will help you to build trust in Jehovah and strengthen your relationship with him?

IT WAS a dangerous time to be a Christian in Rome. Blamed for setting fire to the city in 64 C.E. and accused of hating mankind, Christ’s followers were objects of intense hostility. If you were a Christian back then, you would daily face the possibility of being arrested and tortured. Some of your spiritual brothers and sisters might have been torn to pieces by animals or nailed to a stake and burned alive to serve as nighttime illumination.

² It was likely in this volatile situation that the apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the second time. Would other Christians come to his aid? Paul may have had some initial concerns in that regard, for he wrote to Timothy: “In my first defense no one came to my side, but they all forsook me—may they not be held accountable.” Even so, Paul acknowledged that he had not been entirely without help. He wrote: “But the Lord stood near me and infused power into me.” Yes, the Lord Jesus provided the power Paul needed. And just how practical was that divine help? Note the results: “I was res-

1-3. How was Paul’s trust in Jehovah strengthened? (See opening image.)

cued from the lion's mouth."—2 Tim. 4:16, 17.*

³ Recalling that experience must have strengthened Paul, helping him to trust that Jehovah would fortify him to endure his present trials and any future difficulties that might arise. In fact, he immediately went on to say: "The Lord will rescue me from *every* wicked work." (2 Tim. 4:18) Yes, Paul had learned that even when human assistance is limited, the help that Jehovah and his Son provide is real!

OPPORTUNITIES TO "TRUST IN JEHOVAH"

⁴ Have you at times felt all alone in dealing with a difficult situation? It could have been lack of employment, pressures at school, a health problem, or some other distressing circumstance. Perhaps you asked for assistance, but others disappointed you by falling far short of providing what you needed. Indeed, some problems simply cannot be solved by mere human help. Under such circumstances, is the Bible's counsel to "trust in Jehovah" empty advice? (Prov. 3:5, 6) Is it meaningless? Certainly not! Divine help is very real, as illustrated by numerous Bible accounts.

⁵ Therefore, rather than nurture resentment when human help appears to be limited, view such situations as the apostle did—as opportunities to rely fully on Jehovah and experience firsthand his loving care. This will strengthen your trust in him and make your relationship with him ever more real.

* "The lion's mouth" from which Paul was rescued may have been literal or figurative.

4, 5. (a) From whom can you always receive needed assistance? (b) How can you strengthen your relationship with Jehovah?

TRUST IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

⁶ Can you bring a distressing problem to Jehovah in prayer and thereafter be at peace, knowing that you have done what you can about the situation and he will handle the rest? Yes, you can! (**Read Psalm 62:8; 1 Peter 5:7.**) Learning to do so is an important aspect of developing a relationship with Jehovah. Yet, trusting that Jehovah will provide what you need can be quite a challenge. Why? One reason may be that Jehovah does not always respond right away.—Ps. 13:1, 2; 74:10; 89:46; 90:13; Hab. 1:2.

⁷ Why does Jehovah not give us an immediate response to our every request? Recall that he likens our relationship with him to that of children with a father. (Ps. 103:13) A child cannot rightly expect a parent to grant every request or to do so right away. Some of a child's requests may be mere passing whims. Others must wait till the time is right. Still others may not be in the child's best interests or in the best interests of others involved. Furthermore, to concede immediately to a child's every request would change the relationship to one of master and slave, the child being the master. Similarly, Jehovah may in our best interests allow time to pass before his response to our prayers becomes evident. That is his prerogative as our wise Creator, loving Master, and heavenly Father. Fulfilling all our requests right away would distort the proper relationship between us and him.—Compare Isaiah 29:16; 45:9.

6. Why might it be especially challenging to trust in Jehovah when we are under stress?

7. Why does Jehovah not always answer our prayers immediately?

⁸ Another factor is that Jehovah is fully aware of our limitations. (Ps. 103:14) Therefore, he does not expect us to endure in our own strength but offers us his fatherly help. Of course, at times, we might feel that we cannot go on anymore. But Jehovah assures us that he will never allow his servants to suffer beyond their limit of endurance. Yes, he will “make the way out.” (**Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.**) Therefore, we have good reason to trust that Jehovah’s assessment of what we can bear is right.

⁹ When relief does not immediately follow our prayers for help, let us wait on the One who knows just when to act in our behalf. Remember that he too is exercising patience, for he is ever eager to come to our rescue. “Jehovah is waiting patiently to show you favor, and he will rise up to show you mercy. For Jehovah is a God of justice. Happy are all those keeping in expectation of him.”—Isa. 30:18.

“THE LION’S MOUTH”

¹⁰ When under severe hardship, you may feel as did Paul—that you are in or at least very near “the lion’s mouth.” These are times when trust in Jehovah is most challenging—and most essential. For example, suppose you are nursing a dear family member through a chronic illness. Perhaps you have prayed for wis-

8. What does Jehovah promise with regard to our personal limitations?

9. What should we do when relief does not immediately follow our prayers for help?

10-12. (a) How might circumstances become particularly difficult for a Christian who is caring for a chronically ill family member? (b) How will trusting in Jehovah during difficult times affect one’s relationship with him? Illustrate.

dom and strength.* Having done all you can in this regard, do you not find a measure of peace in knowing that Jehovah has his eye upon you and will provide what you need to endure faithfully?—Ps. 32:8.

¹¹ Circumstances might make it seem otherwise. You might receive conflicting opinions from doctors. Or relatives who you had hoped would provide comfort might instead seem to make the situation more difficult for you. Keep looking to Jehovah for strength. Keep drawing close to him. (**Read 1 Samuel 30:3, 6.**) When relief comes, your relationship with him will be stronger.

¹² Linda[#] came to know the truthfulness of this after some years of helping to care for her ailing parents during their final years. “While in the situation, my husband, brother, and I often found it hard to know what to do. We felt helpless at times. Looking back, however, we see more clearly how Jehovah proved to be with us. He strengthened us and provided just what we needed, even when it seemed that we had run out of options.”

¹³ Implicit trust in Jehovah can also help when we are faced with tragedy. At the time that Rhonda’s non-Witness husband was filing for divorce, her brother was diagnosed with lupus, a potentially life-threatening illness. A few months later, her brother’s wife

* Articles have been published to help Christians cope with illness as well as to help caregivers. See the February 8, 1994; February 8, 1997; May 22, 2000; and January 22, 2001, issues of *Awake!*

[#] Names have been changed.

13. How did trusting in Jehovah help one sister to cope with a series of distressing experiences?



Even within the family,
trials may come that test
our relationship with Jehovah
(See paragraphs 14-16)

died. When Rhonda felt that she had begun to recover from these traumatic experiences, she started regular pioneering. Soon thereafter her mother died. What helped Rhonda cope? She explains: “I communicated with Jehovah every day, even with regard to small decisions. Doing so made Jehovah real to me. It taught me to rely on him rather than on myself or even on other people. And the help he gave me was real—all my needs were cared for. As a result, I have experienced working hand in hand with Jehovah.”

¹⁴ Consider another situation. Suppose a beloved relative is disfellowshipped. From your study of the Bible, you know how disfellowshipped

ones are to be treated. (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 John 10) Yet, upholding the disfellowshipping decision may at times seem very difficult, even impossible.* Can you trust that your heavenly Father will give you the fortitude you need to be resolute in abiding by the Bible’s direction about disfellowshipping? Do you see here an opportunity for you to make your relationship with Jehovah stronger by forming a closer bond with him?

¹⁵ In this regard, think for a moment about the first man, Adam. Did he really believe that he could disobey Jehovah and continue living? No, for the Scriptures tell us that Adam “was not

* See the article “Why Disfellowshipping Is a Loving Provision,” in this issue.

14. What trust can a faithful Christian whose relative is disfellowshipped have?

15. Why did Adam disobey Jehovah’s command in Eden?

deceived.” (1 Tim. 2:14) Why, then, did he disobey? Adam’s eating of the fruit that Eve offered him must have been because of his desire for his wife. He listened to her voice rather than to that of his God, Jehovah.—Gen. 3:6, 17.

¹⁶ Does this suggest that we should not have strong love for our relatives? Of course not! But our strongest love should be for Jehovah. **(Read Matthew 22:37, 38.)** This is actually in the best interests of our relatives, whether they are presently serving Jehovah or not. So keep strengthening your love for Jehovah and your trust in him. And if you are particularly troubled over the course of a dis-

16. For whom should our love be the strongest, and why?

fellowshipped relative, pour out your heart to Jehovah in prayer.* (Rom. 12:12; Phil. 4:6, 7) Use this heartbreaking situation to make your relationship with Jehovah more real. This, in turn, will help you to look to Jehovah for the best possible outcome.

WHILE WE WAIT

¹⁷ For what purpose was Paul “rescued from the lion’s mouth”? He states: “So that through me the preaching might be fully accomplished and all the nations might hear it.” (2 Tim. 4:17) As we, like Paul, busy ourselves in the preaching work, we trust that Jehovah will see to it that all other necessary things “will be added” to us. (Matt. 6:33) As Kingdom preachers, we have been “entrusted with the good news,” and we are considered by Jehovah to be his “fellow workers.” (1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Cor. 3:9) By being as active as possible in God’s work, we will find it easier to wait for relief.

¹⁸ Let us, then, use the present time to strengthen our relationship with God. If any situation makes us anxious, use it to draw closer to Jehovah. Yes, by being immersed in God’s Word, by praying continually, and by staying absorbed in spiritual activities, let us trust that Jehovah can and will see us through our present circumstances as well as everything else that lies ahead.

* Articles have been published to help faithful family members cope when a beloved relative leaves Jehovah. See the September 1, 2006 (pages 17-21), and the January 15, 2007 (pages 17-20), issues of *The Watchtower*.

17. When we stay busy in Kingdom preaching, how do we show that we trust in Jehovah?

18. In what ways can we build trust in Jehovah and strengthen our relationship with him?

Show your trust in Jehovah by staying busy in his work
(See paragraph 17)





Why Disfellowshipping Is a Loving Provision

“WHEN I listened to the announcement that my son had been disfellowshipped, my whole world seemed to come to an end,” recalls Julian. “He was my oldest child, and we were very close; we did lots of things together. He had always been an exemplary son, and then suddenly he began behaving in a way that was unacceptable. My wife wept repeatedly, and I did not know how to console her. We kept asking ourselves if we had somehow failed as parents.”

How can it be said that disfellowshipping a Christian is a loving provision if it causes so much pain? What reasons do the Scriptures give for taking such drastic measures? And what exactly leads to a person’s being disfellowshipped?

TWO FACTORS THAT LEAD TO DISFELLOWSHIPping

Two factors—which must coincide—result in the disfellowshipping of one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. First, a baptized Witness commits a serious sin. Second, he does not repent of his sin.

Although Jehovah does not demand perfection from us, he does have a standard of holiness that he expects his servants to meet. For example, Jehovah insists that we avoid such serious sins as sexual immorality, idolatry, thievery, extortion, murder, and spiritism.—1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Rev. 21:8.

Would you not agree that Jehovah’s clean standards are reasonable and that they serve to protect us? Who does not prefer to live among peaceful, decent people who can be trusted? We find such an environment among our spiritual brothers and sisters, thanks to the promise we make at the time of our dedication to God to live in harmony with the guidelines found in his Word.

But what if a baptized Christian commits a serious sin because of human weakness? Faithful servants of Jehovah in the past made such mistakes, yet God did not reject them outright. King David is a prime example. David committed adultery and murder; yet, the prophet Nathan informed him: “Jehovah . . . forgives your sin.”—2 Sam. 12:13.

God pardoned David’s sin because of David’s sincere repentance. (Ps. 32:1-5) Likewise, a servant of Jehovah today will be disfellowshipped only if he is unrepentant or continues to practice what is bad. (Acts 3:19; 26:20) If genuine repentance is not manifest to the elders who serve on a judicial committee, they must disfellowship the person.

At first, we may feel that the decision to disfellowship the wrongdoer is drastic or even unkind, especially if we have close ties to that person. Nevertheless, Jehovah’s Word gives us

sound reasons for believing that such a decision is a loving one.

DISFELLOWSHIPING CAN BENEFIT EVERYONE CONCERNED

Jesus pointed out that “wisdom is proved righteous by its results.” (Matt. 11:19, ftn.) A wise decision to disfellowship an unrepentant wrongdoer produces righteous results. Consider these three:

Disfellowshipping wrongdoers honors Jehovah’s name. Since we bear the name of Jehovah, our behavior inevitably reflects on his name. (Isa. 43:10) Just as a son’s conduct can bring either honor or reproach on his parents, so people’s feelings toward Jehovah will depend to some extent on the good or bad example they observe in his name people. God’s good name is upheld if the people who bear that name make Jehovah’s moral standard their own. The situation was somewhat similar in Ezekiel’s time when people of the nations closely associated the name of Jehovah with the Jews.—Ezek. 36:19-23.

We would bring reproach on God’s holy name if we practiced immorality. The apostle Peter counseled Christians: “As obedient children, stop being molded by the desires you formerly had in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, become holy yourselves in all your conduct, for it is written: ‘You must be holy, because I am holy.’” (1 Pet. 1:14-16) Clean, holy conduct brings honor to God’s name.

If one of Jehovah’s Witnesses practices what is bad, however, it is likely that friends and acquaintances will become aware of this. The disfellowshipping act shows that Jehovah has a clean people who adhere to Scriptural guidelines in order to maintain that holiness. A stranger once came to a meeting at a Kingdom Hall in Switzerland and said that he wanted to become a member of the congregation. His sister had been disfellowshipped for immorality. He said that he wanted to join an organization that “does not tolerate bad conduct.”

Disfellowshipping protects the clean, Christian congregation. The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians of the danger of allowing willful sinners to remain in their midst. He compared the bad influence of such ones to that of leaven that causes a whole lump of dough to rise. “A little leaven ferments the whole batch of dough,” he noted. He then counseled them: “Remove the wicked person from among yourselves.”—1 Cor. 5:6, 11-13.

Apparently, “the wicked person” mentioned by Paul blatantly practiced immorality. And other congregation members had even begun to justify his conduct. (1 Cor. 5:1, 2) If such a gross sin had been condoned, other Christians might have felt inclined to follow the immoral customs of the licentious city in which they lived. Overlooking willful sins encourages a lax attitude toward divine standards. (Eccl. 8:11) Furthermore, unrepentant sinners could become “rocks hidden below water” and shipwreck the faith of others in the congregation.—Jude 4, 12.

Disfellowshipping may bring the wrongdoer to his senses. Jesus once spoke of a young man who left his father’s home and squandered his inheritance on a life of debauchery. The prodigal son learned the hard way that life outside his father’s home was empty and heartless. The son finally came to his senses, repented, and took the initiative to return to his family. (Luke 15:11-24) Jesus’ description of the loving father who rejoiced at his son’s change of heart helps us understand Jehovah’s feelings. “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that someone wicked changes his way and keeps living,” he assures us.—Ezek. 33:11.

Likewise, disfellowshipped ones who are no longer members of the Christian congregation—their spiritual family—may come to realize what they have lost. The bitter fruits of their sinful course, together with the memories of happier days when they enjoyed a good relationship with Jehovah and his people, could bring them to their senses.

Love and firmness are needed to produce the desired result. “Should the righteous one strike me, it would be an act of loyal love,” said the psalmist David, and “should he reprove me, it would be like oil on my head.” (Ps. 141:5) To illustrate: Imagine a hiker who succumbs to exhaustion on a cold winter day. He begins to suffer from hypothermia, and he feels drowsy. If he falls asleep in the snow, he will die. While waiting for a rescue party, his companion occasionally slaps him in the face to keep him awake. The slap may sting, but it could well save his life. Similarly, David recognized that a righteous person might need to give him painful correction for his own good.

In many cases, disfellowshipping provides the discipline the erring one needs. After some ten years, Julian’s son, mentioned at the outset, cleaned up his life, returned to the congregation, and now serves as an elder. “Being disfellowshipped brought me face-to-face with the consequences of my lifestyle,” he admits. “I needed that sort of discipline.”—Heb. 12:7-11.

THE LOVING WAY TO DEAL WITH DISFELLOWSHIPED ONES

True, disfellowshipping is a spiritual tragedy, but the tragedy need not become an unmitigated disaster. All of us play a role in making sure that the disfellowshipping serves its purpose.

Elders who have the sad task of communicating a disfellowshipping decision strive to reflect Jehovah’s love. When informing the person of their decision, they kindly and clearly explain the steps he needs to take to be reinstated in the congregation. For the sake of reminding disfellowshipped ones of how they can return to Jehovah, elders may periodically visit those who



Efforts are made to help repentant ones return to Jehovah

have given some evidence of changing their ways.*

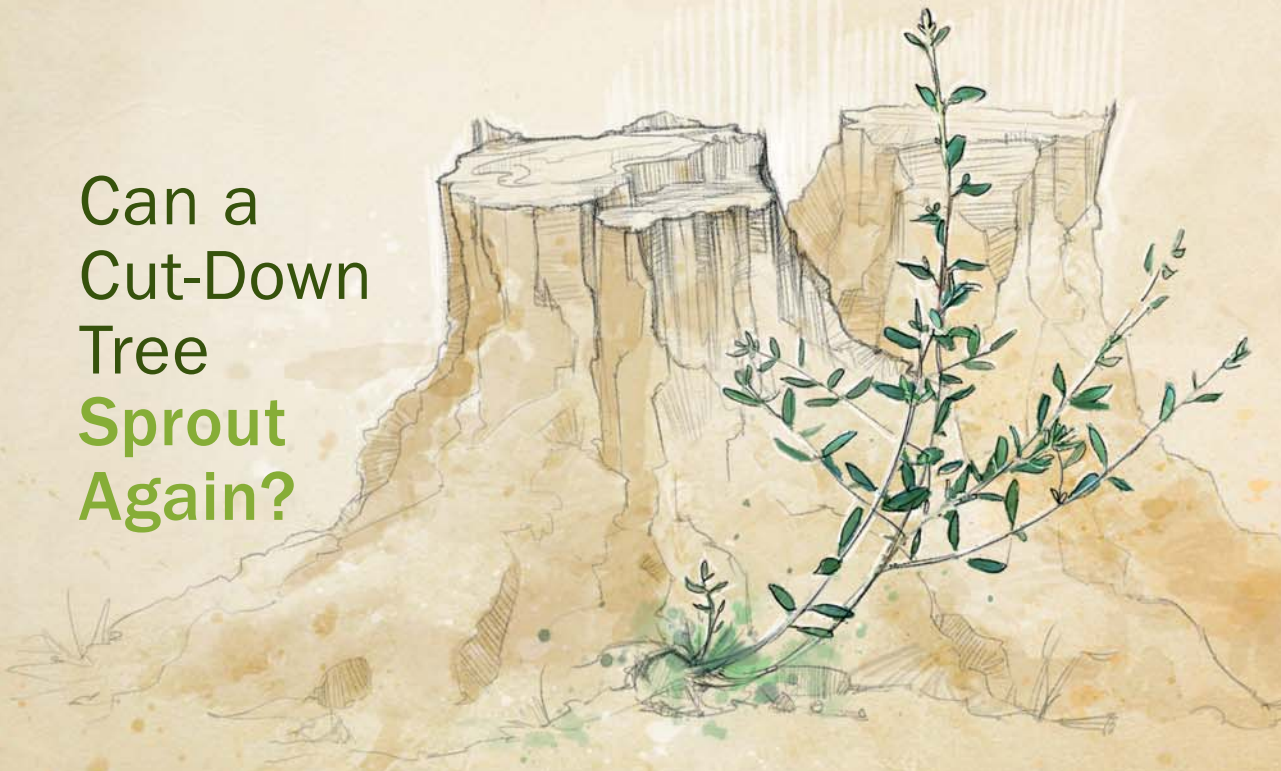
Family members can show love for the congregation and the erring one by respecting the disfellowshipping decision. “He was still my son,” explains Julian, “but his lifestyle had put up a barrier between us.”

All in the congregation can show principled love by avoiding contact and conversation with the disfellowshipped person. (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 John 10, 11) They thus reinforce the discipline that Jehovah has given him through the elders. Furthermore, they can give extra love and support to the family of the disfellowshipped one, who suffer considerably and who should not be made to feel that they too are excluded from association with fellow believers.—Rom. 12:13, 15.

“Disfellowshipping is an arrangement that we need, one that helps us live according to Jehovah’s standards,” Julian concludes. “In the long run, despite the pain, it brings good results. Had I been tolerant of my son’s bad conduct, he would never have recovered.”

* See *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1991, pages 21-23.

Can a Cut-Down Tree Sprout Again?



COMPARED to a majestic cedar of Lebanon, a gnarled and knotty olive tree may not seem especially impressive. But olive trees have the remarkable ability to survive the elements. Some are estimated to be 1,000 years old. An olive tree's expansive root system enables it to rejuvenate itself even when the trunk has been destroyed. As long as the roots remain alive, it will sprout again.

The patriarch Job was convinced that even if he should die, he would live again. (Job 14:13-15) He used a tree—perhaps an olive tree—to illustrate his confidence in God's ability to resurrect him. "There is hope even for a tree," Job said. "If it is cut down, it will sprout again." When rainfall breaks a severe drought, a dry olive stump can spring back to life with shoots rising from its roots, producing "branches like a new plant."
—Job 14:7-9.

Just as a cultivator longs to see the roots of a cut-down olive tree spring up again, Jehovah God longs to restore his deceased servants and many others to life. (Matt. 22:31, 32; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) What a joy it will be to welcome back the dead and see them enjoy productive lives once again!

