

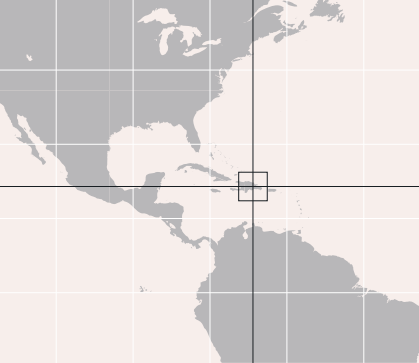
JULY 2016

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:  
AUGUST 29–SEPTEMBER 25, 2016



COVER IMAGE:  
**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

On the beach at Las Terrenas, a special pioneer uses the Bible to share the good news with a man who has harvested coconuts

PUBLISHERS  
**37,536**

BIBLE STUDIES  
**69,892**

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE  
(2015)  
**120,103**

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THEY OFFERED  
THEMSELVES  
WILLINGLY



# in Ghana



DO YOU know a brother or a sister who moved to a foreign country where there is a greater need for more Kingdom publishers? We often say that such Witnesses are need-greaterers. Have you ever asked yourself: ‘What motivates them to serve abroad? How do they prepare themselves for this type of service? Would I be able to share in it?’ A good way to get answers to such questions is, of course, to talk to these brothers and sisters. So let us do that.

## WHAT MOTIVATES THEM?

*What caused you to start thinking about serving in a foreign country where there is a greater need?* **Amy**, now in her mid-30’s, comes from the **United States**. She relates: “For years, I thought about serving in a foreign country, but it seemed to be a goal beyond my reach.” What changed her view? “In 2004 a married couple serving in Belize

invited me to visit them and to pioneer with them for one month. I did—and I loved it! One year later, I moved to Ghana to serve there as a pioneer.”

Some years ago, **Stephanie**, now in her late 20’s and also from the **United States**, took a close look at her circumstances and thought: ‘I’m in good health and have no family obligations. Really, I could be doing much more for Jehovah than I’m doing right now.’ That honest self-evaluation motivated her to move to Ghana to expand her ministry. **Filip** and **Ida**, a middle-aged pioneer couple from **Denmark**, always dreamed of moving to a territory where the need is greater. They searched for ways to make their dream come true. “When the opportunity presented itself,” says Filip, “it was as if Jehovah told us: ‘Go ahead!’” In 2008 they moved to Ghana and served there for more than three years.



Eric and Amy



## Before moving to a foreign country, ask yourself . . .

- Will I be able to support myself? my family?  
—1 Thess. 2:9.
- Can I get an appropriate visa?
- Have I considered the climate and the culture?
- Have I taken measures to safeguard my health?
- Am I willing to learn the language of the country?
- Will I be “a source of great comfort” to the congregation?  
—Col. 4:11.

**Hans and Brook**, a pioneer couple in their 30’s, are serving in the **United States**. In 2005 they assisted with disaster relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Later, they applied to help with international construction projects but were not invited. “Then,” recalls Hans, “we heard a convention talk in which it was mentioned that King David accepted that he would not be allowed to build the temple, so he changed his goal. That point helped us to see that it is all right to change one’s theocratic goals.” (1 Chron. 17:1-4, 11, 12; 22:5-11) Adds Brook, “Jehovah wanted us to knock on another door.”

After hearing fascinating experiences from their friends who served in other countries, Hans and Brook were motivated to try pioneering abroad. In 2012 they went to Ghana and were able to serve there for four months, assisting a sign-language congregation. Though they had to return to the United States, the experience of

serving in Ghana deepened their desire to keep Kingdom interests first in life. They have since helped with a branch construction project in Micronesia.

## TAKING STEPS TO REACH THEIR GOAL

*How did you prepare for serving where the need is greater?* “I did research in *Watchtower* articles related to serving where the need is greater,” says Stephanie.\* “I also talked with the congregation elders and the circuit overseer and his wife about my desire to serve abroad. Above all, I often mentioned my goal in prayer to Jehovah.” At the same time, Stephanie kept her life simple, which allowed her to set aside funds to support herself while serving abroad.

Hans relates: “We prayed to Jehovah for guidance because we want-

\* See, for example, the articles “Can You Serve Where the Need for Kingdom Publishers Is Greater?” and “Can You Step Over Into Macedonia?”—*The Watchtower*, April 15 and December 15, 2009.





- 1 Brook and Hans
- 2 Aaron and Stephanie
- 3 Ida and Filip
- 4 Adria and George
- 5 Christine and Gideon

ed to go where he directed us. We also included in our prayers the specific date we were going to put our plan into action.” The couple sent letters to four branch offices. After they received a very positive response from the branch in Ghana, they traveled there, intending to visit for two months. “We enjoyed working with the congregation so much,” says Hans, “that we extended our stay.”

**George and Adria**, a couple in their late 30’s from **Canada**, kept in mind that Jehovah blesses good decisions, not merely good intentions. So they took decisive steps to reach their goal. They contacted a sister who was serving where the need is greater in Ghana and asked her many questions. They also wrote to the branch in Canada and to

the branch in Ghana. “And,” says Adria, “we looked for ways to simplify our life even more than we had already done.” Those decisions enabled them to move to Ghana in 2004.

## HANDLING CHALLENGES

*What challenges did you encounter after you moved, and how did you cope with them?* For Amy, her initial challenge was homesickness. “Everything was so different from what I was used to.” What helped her? “Calls from family members who said how much they appreciated my service helped me to keep in mind why I had decided to move. My family and I later started to use video chats. Because we could see one another, my family did not seem to be so far away.” Amy



relates that befriending an experienced local sister helped her to gain insight into different customs. “My friend became my go-to person whenever I did not understand why people reacted in certain ways. With her help, I learned what to do and what to avoid, which was very beneficial in carrying out my ministry with joy.”

George and Adria relate that when they first moved to Ghana, they felt as if they had gone back in time. “Instead of using a washing machine, we used buckets. Preparing a meal seemed to take ten times longer than we were used to,” says Adria. “But after a while, the somewhat difficult situations really just became new experiences.” Brook says: “Despite the obstacles that we pioneers face, we live a satisfying life. When we put together all the upbuilding experiences that we have had, they form a beautiful bouquet of memories that we treasure.”

## A REWARDING MINISTRY

*Why do you recommend this type of Kingdom service to others?* “Preaching in a territory where you meet individuals who are so eager to learn the truth that they want to study the Bible with you every day is such a joy,” says Stephanie. “To go and serve where the need is greater has been one of the better decisions I have ever made!” In 2014, Stephanie married **Aaron**, and today they serve at the Ghana branch office.

“It’s such a good experience,” says **Christine**, a pioneer from **Germany** who is now in her early 30’s. Christine served in Bolivia before moving to Ghana. She adds: “Being far away from my family, I always turn to Jehovah for help. He has become more real to me than ever before. I also experience the outstanding unity found among Jehovah’s people. This service has enriched my life.” Christine recently married **Gideon**, and together they continue to serve in Ghana.

Filip and Ida tell us what they did to help Bible students to progress. “We used to have 15 or more

Bible studies, but we limited the number to 10 so that we could teach our students more thoroughly.” Did the students benefit? Filip relates: “I studied with a young man named Michael. He could study every day and prepared so well that we finished the *Bible Teach* book in one month. After that, Michael became an unbaptized publisher. On his first day in field service, he asked me, ‘Could you help me with my Bible studies?’ I looked at him in surprise. Michael explained that he had started three studies and needed some help in conducting them.” Imagine, the need for more teachers is so great that even Bible students are Bible teachers!

Amy relates how she quickly became aware of a great need: “Shortly after arriving in Ghana, we preached in a small village and searched for deaf individuals. We found, not one deaf person, but eight deaf persons in that one village alone!” In the meantime, Amy married **Eric**, and together they serve as special pioneers. They assist a sign-language congregation to help some of the more than 300 deaf publishers and interested ones in the country. For George and Adria, serving in Ghana allowed them to experience firsthand what it takes to be missionaries. So how happy they were when they received an invitation to attend the 126th class of Gilead School! Today, they are serving as missionaries in Mozambique.

## MOTIVATED BY LOVE

It is heartwarming to see so many from other countries working hard alongside local brothers and sisters so as to bring in the harvest. (John 4: 35) Each week of the year, on average, 120 individuals are baptized in Ghana. As in the case of the 17 need-greaters who have moved to Ghana, many thousands of evangelizers worldwide have been motivated by love for Jehovah to “offer themselves willingly.” They serve in areas where more Kingdom proclaimers are needed. How such willing workers certainly must make Jehovah’s heart rejoice!—Ps. 110:3; Prov. 27:11.



# Seek the Kingdom, Not Things

*“Keep seeking [God’s] Kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”—LUKE 12:31.*

IT HAS been said that man’s necessities are few, but his wants are infinite. It seems that many cannot see the difference between material needs and wants. What is the difference? A “need” is something you must have because your life depends on it. Food, clothing, and shelter—these are legitimate necessities. A “want” is something you would like to have, but it is not essential for everyday living.

<sup>2</sup> What people want may vary considerably, depending on where they live. In developing countries, many may simply want to have enough money to buy a cell phone, a motorbike, or a small plot of land. In wealthier lands, the urge may be to acquire a lavish wardrobe, a bigger house, or a more expensive automobile. In any case, herein lies a real danger—becoming ensnared by materialism, wanting more and more things, whether we need them or not and whether we can afford them or not.

1. What difference is there between what we need and what we want?
2. What are some things that people want?

SONGS: 40, 98

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What difference is there between what we need and what we want?

Why should we control our desire to want more material things?

Why are you convinced that Jehovah can provide your daily needs?

## BEWARE OF THE SNARE OF MATERIALISM

<sup>3</sup> What is materialism? It is a preoccupation with material things rather than spiritual riches. Materialism is rooted in one's desires, priorities, and focus in life. It creates in us a yearning for a lot of material possessions. A materialistic person may not have a lot of money or make expensive purchases. Even poor people can become victims of materialism and can neglect seeking first the Kingdom.—Heb. 13:5.

<sup>4</sup> Satan uses his world's commercial system to seduce us into believing that having material things beyond our actual needs is necessary for the enjoyment of life. He is adept at appealing to “the desire of the eyes.” (1 John 2:15-17; Gen. 3:6; Prov. 27:20) The world offers every kind of material thing, from the superb to the absurd, some of which look very enticing. Have you ever purchased something, not because you needed it, but because it caught your eye in an advertisement or a store display? Did you later realize that you could have lived the rest of your life without it? Such nonessential things only complicate our life and weigh us down. They can ensnare us and distract us from our spiritual routine of studying the Bible, preparing for and attending meetings, and sharing regularly in the ministry. Remember, the apostle John warned: “The world is passing away and so is its desire.”

<sup>5</sup> Satan wants us to slave for Riches

3. What is materialism?

4. How does Satan use “the desire of the eyes”?

5. What can happen to those who use most of their energy to get more things?

rather than for Jehovah. (Matt. 6:24) Those who spend most of their energy accumulating material things end up with a life that is, at best, shallow because it appeals to selfish gratification or that is, at worst, spiritually empty and full of grief and frustration. (1 Tim. 6:9, 10; Rev. 3:17) It is as Jesus described in his illustration of the sower. When the Kingdom message is “sown among the thorns . . . , the *desires for everything else* make inroads and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” —Mark 4:14, 18, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Consider the man Baruch, the prophet Jeremiah's secretary. As Jerusalem was nearing its foretold destruction, Baruch began “seeking great things” for himself—pursuits that had no lasting value. However, the only thing he should have hoped for was to receive what Jehovah promised him: “I will let you escape with *your life*.” (Jer. 45:1-5; ftn.) God certainly was not going to preserve anyone's material possessions in a city that was going to be destroyed. (Jer. 20:5) As we near the end of this system of things, now is not the time to amass more and more material things for ourselves. We should not expect that any of our possessions, regardless of how treasured or valuable they may be, will survive with us through the great tribulation. —Prov. 11:4, ftn.; Matt. 24:21, 22; Luke 12:15.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus gave us the best counsel for securing the necessities of life without being sidetracked, becoming materialistic, or creating needless anxiety for our-

6. What lesson do we learn from Baruch?

7. What will we consider next, and why?



selves. He included this advice in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 6:19-21) Let us read and analyze the portion that is recorded at Matthew 6:25-34. Doing so should convince us that we must ‘keep seeking the Kingdom,’ not *things*.—Luke 12:31.

### JEHOVAH CARES FOR OUR MATERIAL NEEDS

**8 Read Matthew 6:25.** When Jesus told his listeners to “stop being anxious about [their] lives,” it was the same as telling them to “stop worrying.” They were anxious about things they ought not be anxious about. Jesus said to stop that—and for good reason. Needless anxiety or worry, even about legitimate concerns, can divide a person’s mind and distract him, shutting out the more important spiritual matters of life. Jesus was so concerned for his disciples that he warned them about this dangerous tendency four more times in his sermon.—Matt. 6:27, 28, 31, 34.

**9** Why did Jesus tell us not to worry about what we will eat, or drink, or wear? Are not such things some of the major necessities of life? They certainly are! If we lack the means to obtain these things, will we not naturally be anxious? Of course we will, and Jesus knew that. He was well-aware of people’s day-to-day needs. More than that, he knew of the difficult conditions facing his disciples who centuries later would live during “the last days,” characterized by “critical times hard to deal with.” (2 Tim. 3:1) Such conditions include unemployment, inflation, food

shortages, and abject poverty that many experience. Yet, Jesus also realized that ‘life means more than food and the body than clothing.’

**10** Earlier in his sermon, Jesus taught his audience to petition their heavenly Father for their physical needs, saying that they could pray: “Give us today our bread for this day.” (Matt. 6:11) Or as he put it on a later occasion: “Give us each day our bread according to our daily needs.” (Luke 11:3) But that counsel does not mean that our material provisions should dominate our thinking. In that same model prayer, Jesus gave priority to praying for God’s Kingdom to come. (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2) To put his listeners’ minds at ease, Jesus next highlighted Jehovah’s matchless record as a Provider.

**11 Read Matthew 6:26.** We should “observe intently the birds of heaven.” As small as those creatures are, they eat a lot of fruit, seeds, insects, or worms. For their body weight, they consume proportionately more than humans. Yet, they do not have to cultivate the ground and plant seed for food. Jehovah provides everything they need. (Ps. 147:9) Of course, he does not put the food in their beaks! They have to go and find it, but the food is there in abundance.

**12** For Jesus, it was unthinkable that his heavenly Father would provide food for the birds but not take care of the same basic needs of humans.<sup>[1]</sup> (1 Pet. 5:

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10. When Jesus taught his followers how to pray, what did he say should be most important in their life?

11, 12. What do we learn from the way Jehovah cares for the birds of heaven? (See opening picture.)

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8, 9. (a) Why should we not worry too much about the things we need? (b) What did Jesus know about humans and their needs?



Can you simplify your life to focus more on the Kingdom?  
(See paragraph 20)

## How to Simplify Your Life

1. Identify your actual needs
2. Eliminate unnecessary expenses
3. Prepare a realistic budget\*
4. Dispose of things you do not use
5. Pay off any debts that you have
6. Cut back on secular employment
7. Plan how to expand your ministry

\* See the box “How to Develop a Budget” in the July 2010 *Awake!*, p. 8.

6, 7) He will not put the food in our mouths, but he may bless our efforts to grow the food we need or to earn the money to buy our daily provisions. In cases of need, he may motivate others to share what they have. Although Jesus did not mention providing shelter for the birds of heaven, Jehovah has provided them with the instincts, skills, and materials needed to make nests for themselves. Jehovah can likewise help us find adequate housing for our families.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus asked his listeners: “Are you not worth more than [the birds of heaven] are?” No doubt, Jesus had in mind that he would soon give his life in behalf

13. What proves that we are worth more than the birds of heaven?

of mankind. (Compare Luke 12:6, 7.) Christ’s ransom sacrifice was not provided for any other living creatures. Jesus did not die for the birds of heaven, but he did die for us so that we might enjoy unending life.—Matt. 20:28.

<sup>14</sup> **Read Matthew 6:27.** Why did Jesus then say that the anxious person cannot add even a cubit to his life? Because needlessly worrying about our daily needs will not help us to live longer. Instead, overwhelming anxiety is more likely to shorten our life span.

<sup>15</sup> **Read Matthew 6:28-30.** Who does not want to have nice clothing, especial-

14. What can an anxious person never do?

15, 16. (a) What do we learn from the way Jehovah cares for the lilies of the field? (See opening picture.) (b) What questions might we need to ask ourselves, and why?



ly when engaging in spiritual activities—sharing in the ministry or attending meetings and assemblies? Even so, must we be “anxious about clothing”? Jesus again turns our attention to Jehovah’s handiwork. In this case, we can learn a lot from the appearance of “the lilies of the field.” Jesus may have had in mind such lilylike flowers as gladiolus, hyacinths, irises, and tulips—all beautiful in their own way. These creations do not have to spin thread and sew or weave garments for themselves. Yet, their blooms are gorgeous to behold! Why, “not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these”!

<sup>16</sup> Do not miss the point of what Jesus is saying: “If this is how God clothes the vegetation of the field . . . , will he not

much rather clothe you, you with little faith?” Most assuredly he will! Jesus’ disciples, though, were somewhat lacking in faith. (Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20) They needed stronger faith and trust in Jehovah. What about us? How strong is our faith in Jehovah’s desire and ability to provide for us?

<sup>17</sup> **Read Matthew 6:31, 32.** We should not imitate the people of “the nations,” who have no real faith in a loving heavenly Father who cares for those who put the interests of his Kingdom first in their life. Trying to accumulate all “the things the nations are eagerly pursuing” would damage our relationship with Jehovah. Instead, we can be ever confident that if

17. What might damage our relationship with Jehovah?



we do what we are supposed to do—give spiritual interests priority in our life—Jehovah will not hold back what is good from us. Our “godly devotion” should prompt us to be content with “food and clothing,” or “sustenance and shelter.”—1 Tim. 6:6-8; ftn.

### DOES GOD’S KINGDOM COME FIRST IN YOUR LIFE?

**18 Read Matthew 6:33.** Christ’s disciples must always make the Kingdom their first concern in life. If we do that, then, as Jesus said, “all these other things will be added” to us. Why could he say that? He explained in the preceding verse: “Your heavenly Father *knows* that you need all these things,” meaning the necessities of life. Jehovah can easily anticipate our individual needs regarding food, clothing, and shelter, even before we become aware of them. (Phil. 4:19) He knows which piece of our clothing will wear out next. He knows what our dietary requirements are and what would be adequate shelter for us, given the size of our family. Jehovah will see to it that we have what we really *need*.

**19 Read Matthew 6:34.** Note that for the second time, Jesus says: “Never be anxious.” He wants us to address life’s concerns one day at a time—fully confident that Jehovah will help us. If a person is unduly anxious about what may happen in the future, he may try to rely on himself rather than on God, and that can adversely affect his relationship with Jehovah.—Prov. 3:5, 6; Phil. 4:6, 7.

18. What does Jehovah know about us personally, and what will he do for us?

19. Why should we not worry about what might happen in the future?

### SEEK THE KINGDOM FIRST, AND JEHOVAH WILL ADD THE REST

**20** It is futile to sacrifice the pursuit of Kingdom interests in order to maintain a materialistic lifestyle. Instead, we should pursue spiritual goals. For example, can you transfer to a congregation where the need for Kingdom publishers is greater? Are you able to pioneer? If you are pioneering, have you thought about applying for the School for Kingdom Evangelizers? Could you serve as a part-time commuter, helping out at a Bethel facility or a remote translation office? Could you become a Local Design/Construction volunteer, working part-time on Kingdom Hall projects? Think about what you might be able to do to simplify your lifestyle so that you can get more involved in Kingdom activities. Prayerfully consider the box “How to Simplify Your Life,” and begin taking the steps needed to achieve your goal.

**21** For good reason, Jesus taught us to seek the Kingdom, not things. By doing so, we need never be anxious about our material *needs*. We draw closer to Jehovah by putting our trust in him and not trying to indulge every whim or to buy every *thing* the world offers, even if we can afford it. Simplifying our life now will help us to “get a firm hold on the real life” yet to come.—1 Tim. 6:19.

20. (a) What is a goal you may set in Jehovah’s service? (b) What can you do to simplify your life?

21. What will help you to draw closer to Jehovah?

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#### ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 12) To understand why Jehovah at times might allow a Christian to lack sufficient food, see “Questions From Readers” in the September 15, 2014, issue of *The Watchtower*, p. 22.



# Why Must We “Keep on the Watch”?

*“You do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”—MATT. 24:42.*

FIVE, four, three, two, one! As we see the clock on the video screen counting down, we know that it is time to be in our seats to enjoy the musical prelude that begins a convention session. It is time to listen quietly to the beautiful music of the Watchtower orchestra and, most important, prepare our mind and heart for the talks that will follow. But what if some individuals are distracted, milling about or conversing with their friends, unaware that the program is beginning? They have evidently failed to keep on the watch as to what time it is and what is taking place around them—the chairman is on the platform, the music is playing, and the audience is seated. That scenario may help us appreciate the “countdown” for a much greater event, one that calls for us to be keenly aware of what is coming in the near future. And what event is that?

<sup>2</sup> When speaking of “the conclusion of the system of things,” Jesus Christ urged his disciples: “Keep looking, keep

1. Illustrate why it is important to be aware of what time it is and what is happening around us. (See opening picture.)
2. Why did Jesus tell his disciples to “keep on the watch”?

SONGS: 136, 129

## HOW CAN WE KEEP ON THE WATCH DESPITE . . .

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the influence of the Devil?

---

the spirit of the world?

---

our own weaknesses?

awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is.” After that, Jesus admonished them repeatedly: “*Keep on the watch.*” (Matt. 24:3; **read Mark 13:32-37.**) Matthew’s account of the same discussion also reveals that Jesus warned his followers to stay alert: “*Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. . . . Prove yourselves ready, because the Son of man is coming at an hour that you do not think to be it.*” Again, he said: “*Keep on the watch, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour.*”—Matt. 24:42-44; 25:13.

<sup>3</sup> As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we take seriously Jesus’ warning. We know that we are living deep in “the time of the end” and that there cannot be much time left before the “great tribulation” begins! (Dan. 12:4; Matt. 24:21) We see distressing wars, increasing immorality and lawlessness, religious confusion, food shortages, pestilences, and earthquakes taking place around the world. We know that a phenomenal Kingdom-preaching work is being accomplished by Jehovah’s people everywhere. (Matt. 24:7, 11, 12, 14; Luke 21:11) We eagerly anticipate what the Lord’s coming will mean for us and for the accomplishment of God’s purpose.—Mark 13:26, 27.

### COUNTING DOWN THE TIME

<sup>4</sup> We know that every convention session has a precise time to start. However, try as hard as we might, we cannot pinpoint the exact year, much less day

3. Why do we pay attention to Jesus’ warning?

4. (a) Why can we believe that Jesus now knows when Armageddon will occur? (b) Although we do not know when the great tribulation will begin, what can we be sure of?

and hour, when the great tribulation will begin. When on earth, Jesus said: “Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matt. 24:36) But Christ has been empowered in heaven to wage war against Satan’s world. (Rev. 19:11-16) Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that Jesus now knows when Armageddon will occur. We, however, do not know. It is imperative that we stay watchful until the tribulation occurs. Yet, the timing of that event has never been uncertain to Jehovah. He has determined exactly when the end will come. He is counting down the time to the start of the great tribulation, and its start “will not be late!” (**Read Habakkuk 2:1-3.**) How can we be sure of this?

<sup>5</sup> Jehovah’s prophecies have always been fulfilled right on time! Consider his precise timing when he delivered the Israelites from Egypt. Referring to Nisan 14, 1513 B.C.E., Moses stated: “At the end of the 430 years, *on this very day*, all the multitudes of Jehovah went out of the land of Egypt.” (Ex. 12:40-42) Those “430 years” began when Jehovah’s covenant with Abraham went into effect in 1943 B.C.E. (Gal. 3:17, 18) Sometime later, Jehovah told Abraham: “Know for certain that your offspring will be foreigners in a land not theirs and that the people there will enslave them and afflict them for 400 years.” (Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6) Those “400 years” of affliction evidently began in 1913 B.C.E. when Ishmael mocked Isaac at the time of his being weaned, and they ended

5. Give an example to show that Jehovah’s prophecies are always fulfilled right on time.



when the Israelites made their exodus out of Egypt in 1513 B.C.E. (Gen. 21:8-10; Gal. 4:22-29) Yes, four centuries in advance, Jehovah set the precise time for the deliverance of his people!

<sup>6</sup> Joshua, who was among those delivered from Egypt, reminded all Israel: “You well know with all your heart and with all your soul that not one word out of all the good promises that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed.” (Josh. 23: 2, 14) We can be certain that Jehovah’s promise of deliverance through the great tribulation will not fail us either. However, if we want to survive the destruction of this system, we must keep on the watch.

#### **WATCHFULNESS IS ESSENTIAL FOR SURVIVAL**

<sup>7</sup> We can learn a lesson from ancient times about the importance of being watchful. Back then, many larger cities—such as Jerusalem—were surrounded by high walls. The walls provided physical protection from invaders as well as elevated vantage points from which to watch the surrounding landscape. Day and night, watchmen were stationed on the walls and at the gates. They were to alert the city’s inhabitants of any approaching danger. (Isa. 62:6) It was a life-and-death matter that the watchmen remain awake and attentive at their posts.—Ezek. 33:6.

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6. Why can we be sure that Jehovah will save his people?

7, 8. (a) What was the role of a watchman in ancient times, and what lesson does that teach us? (b) Give an example of what could happen when watchmen fell asleep on the job.

<sup>8</sup> Jewish historian Josephus relates that in 70 C.E., the Roman forces were able to take possession of the Tower of Antonia, adjoining the city wall of Jerusalem, because the guards at the gates were asleep! From there, the Romans rushed the temple and set fire to it, resulting in the finale of the greatest tribulation that Jerusalem and the Jewish nation had ever experienced.

<sup>9</sup> Most nations today have “watchmen” in the form of border patrols and high-tech surveillance systems. They watch for intrusions into their territory and for enemies who pose a threat to national security. However, such “watchmen” can perceive only those threats that come from man-made governments or humans. They are unaware of the existence and activities of God’s heavenly Kingdom government in the hands of Christ and the role it will play in the impending judgment on all the nations. (Isa. 9:6, 7, fn.; 56:10; Dan. 2:44) On the other hand, by being alert and watchful spiritually, we will be ready whenever that day of judgment arrives.—Ps. 130:6.

#### **BEWARE OF BEING DISTRACTED FROM YOUR WATCHFULNESS**

<sup>10</sup> Imagine a watchman who has been awake at his post all night. He becomes most weary and apt to fall asleep just before the end of his watch. Likewise, the closer we get to the end of this system of things, the greater the challenge for us to stay awake. How tragic it would be if we were to fail to keep on the watch! Let

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9. What are most people today not aware of?

10, 11. (a) Of what must we be careful, and why? (b) What convinces you that the Devil has influenced people to ignore Bible prophecy?



Are you doing everything you can to remain spiritually alert? (See paragraphs 11-16)

us consider three negative influences that could weaken our alertness and vigilance if we are not careful.

<sup>11</sup> ***The Devil is lulling people into spiritual apathy.*** Shortly before his death, Jesus three times warned his disciples about “the ruler of this world.” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) Jesus knew that the Devil would keep people in darkness mentally in order to undermine the sense of urgency that permeates God’s prophecies about the future. (Zeph. 1: 14) Satan blinds people’s minds through the world empire of false religion. What have you detected in your conversations with others? Has the Devil not already “blinded the minds of the unbelievers” about the coming end of this system of things and the fact that Christ is now ruling God’s Kingdom? (2 Cor. 4:3-6) How often do you hear people say, “I’m not interested”? For the most part, they are apathetic when we try to tell them where this world is headed.

<sup>12</sup> Do not let the apathy of others discourage or dissuade you from keeping

12. Why must we not let the Devil deceive us?

on the watch. You know better. Paul wrote to fellow believers: “You yourselves know very well that Jehovah’s day is coming,” and he added, “exactly as a thief in the night.” (**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.**) Jesus warned us: “Keep ready, because at an hour that you do not think likely, the Son of man is coming.” (Luke 12:39, 40) Soon, Satan will deceive the masses into accepting a false sense of “peace and security.” He will mislead them into thinking that all is well on the world scene. What about us? That day of judgment does not have to “overtake [us] as it would thieves,” provided we “stay awake and keep our senses.” That is why we daily must read God’s written Word and meditate on what Jehovah is telling us.

<sup>13</sup> ***The spirit of the world is inducing spiritual sleep.*** Many are so wrapped up in their mundane affairs of life that they are not “conscious of their spiritual need.” (Matt. 5:3) They are engrossed

13. How is the spirit of the world affecting mankind, and how can we avoid that dangerous influence?

in the material attractions of the world that foster “the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes.” (1 John 2:16) Also, the entertainment industry has intoxicated people with the ‘love of pleasures,’ and the temptations are intensifying year by year. (2 Tim. 3:4) This is why Paul told Christians that they should “not be planning ahead for the desires of the flesh,” which induce spiritual sleep.—Rom. 13:11-14.

<sup>14</sup> Instead of the world’s spirit, we welcome in our life the influence of God’s spirit by which Jehovah has given us a clear understanding of the events that lie ahead of us.<sup>[1]</sup> (1 Cor. 2:12) Yet, we realize that it does not take anything extraordinary to make a person spiritually drowsy—the ordinary things of life will do that if allowed to crowd out our spiritual activities. **(Read Luke 21:34, 35.)** Others may ridicule us for keeping on the watch, but that is no reason for us to lose our sense of urgency. (2 Pet. 3:3-7) Instead, we must regularly associate with fellow Christians at our congregation meetings, where God’s spirit is present.

<sup>15</sup> ***Our imperfect flesh can weaken our resolve to stay alert.*** Jesus knew of the tendency that imperfect humans have to succumb to the weaknesses of the flesh. Consider what happened the night before Jesus was to be executed. In order to maintain his integrity, he needed to turn to his heavenly Father for strength. Jesus asked Peter, James, and John to “keep on the watch” while he prayed. However, they did not recog-

nize the seriousness of what was coming. Rather than watching out for their Master, they gave in to the urge of their flesh and went to sleep. Jesus, though also physically tired, was fully awake in fervent prayer to his Father. That is what his companions should have been doing.—Mark 14:32-41.

<sup>16</sup> To “keep awake” spiritually means more than just having good intentions. A few days before the incident in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told those same disciples to make supplication to Jehovah. **(Read Luke 21:36.)** So to remain spiritually watchful, we too must stay alert in prayer.—1 Pet. 4:7, ftn.

#### PROVE YOURSELVES EVER WATCHFUL

<sup>17</sup> Since Jesus said that the end will come “*at an hour that [we] do not think to be it,*” this is no time to doze off spiritually, no time to pursue the illusions and fantasies that Satan and his world offer and that our flesh craves. (Matt. 24:44) Through the pages of the Bible, God and Christ tell us what they have in store for us in the immediate future and how we can keep on the watch. We have to pay attention to our spirituality, to our relationship with Jehovah, and to Kingdom priorities. We must be aware of time and events so that we can be ready for what is coming. (Rev. 22:20) Our life is at stake!

16. According to Luke 21:36, how did Jesus instruct us to “keep awake”?

17. How can we make sure that we are ready for what is coming in the near future?

14. What warning do we find at Luke 21:34, 35?

15. What happened to Peter, James, and John, and how might that happen to us too?

#### ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 14) See chapter 21 of the book *God’s Kingdom Rules!*



# “Do Not Be Afraid. I Will Help You”



IMAGINE that you are walking on the street late at night. Suddenly you sense that someone is following you. When you stop, the footsteps behind you also stop. When you quicken your pace, so does your pursuer. You start to run; you rush to a friend's house nearby. When your friend opens the door and welcomes you into his home, you heave a sigh of relief.

Perhaps you have not experienced that exact situation, but other anxieties in life may well cause you to be apprehensive. For example, are you struggling with a weakness that you would like to overcome but you keep making the same mistake? Have you been unemployed for a long time and unable to find a job despite all the efforts you make to find one? Are you concerned about getting older and facing health issues that lie ahead of you? Or is there something else that distresses you?

Whatever the problem, would you not appreciate having someone with whom you could share your anxieties and who could provide help when you needed it? Do you have such a close friend? Yes, you do! Jehovah is such a friend to you, just as he was to the patriarch Abraham, as noted at Isaiah 41:8-13. In verses 10 and 13, Jehovah calls out to his servants: “Do not be

afraid, for I am with you. Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you, I will really hold on to you with my right hand of righteousness. For I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, the One saying to you, ‘Do not be afraid. I will help you.’”

## **“I WILL REALLY HOLD ON TO YOU”**

Do not these words reassure you? Put yourself in the word picture that Jehovah has painted for us. Here, you are not depicted as walking hand in hand with Jehovah, though that is a pleasant thought to consider. If you were walking hand in hand, his right hand would be grasping your left hand. Instead, Jehovah holds out his “right hand of righteousness” and grasps “*your* right hand,” as if to pull you out of a distressing circumstance in life. As he does so, he fortifies you with the assurance: “Do not be afraid. I will help you.”

Do you see Jehovah as a loving Father and Friend who will come to your aid when you are in distress? He is interested in you, concerned about your welfare, and determined to help you. When you face hardship, Jehovah wants you to feel secure because he has a strong attachment to you. He is truly “a help that is readily found in times of distress.”—Ps. 46:1.



## FEELINGS OF GUILT OVER PAST MISTAKES

Some torment themselves over their past behavior and wonder whether God has forgiven them. If that is the case with you, think of the faithful man Job, who admitted to ‘the sins of his youth.’ (Job 13:26) The psalmist David experienced a similar feeling and begged Jehovah: “Do not remember the sins of my youth and my transgressions.” (Ps. 25:7) Being imperfect, all of us “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”—Rom. 3:23.

The message in Isaiah chapter 41 was originally addressed to God’s ancient people. They had sinned to such an extent that Jehovah decided to execute judgment on them by having them taken into exile in Babylon. (Isa. 39:6, 7) Still, God was thinking ahead to the time when he would deliver those who would repent and return to him! (Isa. 41:8, 9; 49:8) Jehovah shows the same largeheartedness today toward those who sincerely want to merit his favor.—Ps. 51:1.

Consider the experience of Takuya,\* who was trying to overcome the unclean habits of viewing pornography and practicing masturbation. Time and again, he suffered relapses. How did he feel? “I felt that I was totally unworthy, but when I approached Jehovah in prayer to beg for his forgiveness, he would pick me up from my fallen state.” How did Jehovah do that? Elders in Takuya’s congregation invited him to call them whenever he experienced relapses. He admits: “It was not easy to call them, but whenever I did, I was strengthened.” Then the elders arranged for the circuit overseer to make a shepherding visit on Takuya. The circuit overseer told him: “I am not here by coincidence. I am here because the elders wanted me to be here. They chose you to receive this shepherding visit.” Takuya recalls: “I was the one sinning, yet Jehovah, through the elders, extended help to me.”

\* Some names have been changed.

Takuya progressed to the point of becoming a regular pioneer and is now serving at a branch office. Just as in the case of this brother, God will pick you up from a fallen state.

## BEING ANXIOUS ABOUT HOW TO EARN A LIVING

Being unemployed is a source of anxiety for many. Some lose their job and have a hard time finding another source of income. Imagine how you would feel if you were turned down by one employer after another. In such a situation, some people lose their self-respect. How might Jehovah help you? He may not immediately provide you with an ideal job, but he may help you by having you remember King David’s observations: “I was once young and now I am old, but I have not seen anyone righteous abandoned, nor his children looking for food.” (Ps. 37:25, ftn.) Yes, Jehovah views you as precious, and with his “right hand of righteousness,” he can help you to acquire what you need to keep on serving him.

How might Jehovah help you if you lose your job?





Sara, who lives in Colombia, experienced Jehovah's saving power. She had a demanding but well-paying job with a prestigious company. Yet, she wanted to do more for Jehovah, so she quit her job and started to pioneer. However, the part-time job she needed did not come easily. She set up a small ice-cream parlor but gradually ran out of funds and had to close the shop. "Three long years passed, but thanks to Jehovah, I was able to endure," says Sara. She learned to distinguish between luxuries and necessities and not to be anxious about the next day. (Matt. 6:33, 34) Eventually, her former employer called and offered her the same position that she had before. She replied that she would accept only part-time work and only if she was granted time off for her spiritual activities. Although Sara does not make as much money as she once did, she is able to continue pioneering. Through it all, she says, "I felt the loving hand of Jehovah."

#### **GROWING CONCERNS ABOUT GETTING OLD**

Aging is another major concern. Many people reach retirement age and wonder if they will have enough money to live out the rest of their

life comfortably. They also worry about the health issues that may confront them as they grow older. Most likely it was David who pleaded with Jehovah: "Do not cast me off in my old age; do not abandon me when my strength fails."—Ps. 71:9, 18.

How, then, can servants of Jehovah feel secure in their old age? They need to continue cultivating faith in God, trusting that he will provide their necessities. Of course, if they have tasted some of life's luxuries over the years, they may need to simplify their life and be satisfied with less materially. They may find that eating "a dish of vegetables" rather than "a fattened bull" can be enjoyable and perhaps even better for their health! (Prov. 15:17) If you are focused on pleasing Jehovah, he *will* provide for you even in your old age.

Take the case of José and Rose, who have served Jehovah full-time for over 65 years. Over the years, they have had to care for Rose's father, who needed around-the-clock attention. Also, José had to endure cancer surgery and chemotherapy. Has Jehovah extended his right hand to this faithful couple? Yes, but how? Through Tony and Wendy, a couple in the congregation who made an apartment available to them. Tony and Wendy wanted to offer it rent-free to full-time pioneers. Years before, from a window at his high school, Tony had observed José and Rose regularly going out in field service. He loved them for the zeal that he had seen in them, and this had had a powerful impact on him. Seeing that the elderly couple had given their entire lives to Jehovah, Tony and Wendy were moved to take them in. For the past 15 years, they have helped José and Rose, who are now in their mid-80's. These older ones consider the younger couple's help to be a gift from Jehovah.

God is offering his "right hand of righteousness" to you too. Will you respond by holding out your hand to the One who promises you: "Do not be afraid. I will help you"?

José and Rose with Tony and Wendy







# Grateful Recipients of God’s Undeserved Kindness

*“We all received . . . undeserved kindness upon undeserved kindness.”—JOHN 1:16.*

A WINEGROWER went to the marketplace early one morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. The men he found agreed to the wage he offered and went to work. The owner needed more workers, however, and returned to the marketplace throughout the day to hire more and more men, offering a fair wage even to those whom he hired at the end of the afternoon. When evening came, he gathered the workers together to give them their wages, and he gave the same amount to each of them, whether they had labored many hours or just one. When those first hired realized this, they complained. The winegrower replied: ‘Did you not agree to the wage I offered? Do I not have the right to give all my workers whatever I want? Are you envious because I am generous?’—Matt. 20:1-15, ftn.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus’ parable reminds us of one of Jehovah’s qualities that is often mentioned in the Bible—his “undeserved kindness.”<sup>[1]</sup> **(Read 2 Corinthians 6:1.)** The workers who had

1, 2. (a) Describe Jesus’ illustration of the owner of the vineyard. (b) How does the story illustrate the qualities of generosity and undeserved kindness?

SONGS: 95, 13

## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What is the greatest expression of Jehovah’s undeserved kindness toward mankind?

How can we show that we are no longer ruled by sin but by undeserved kindness?

What blessings come to us as a result of Jehovah’s undeserved kindness?

labored only one hour did not seem to merit receiving the full wage, but the owner of the vineyard showed them extraordinary kindness. Regarding the word for “undeserved kindness,” which is translated “grace” in many Bible versions, one scholar wrote: “The whole basic idea of the word is that of a free and undeserved gift, of something given to a man unearned and unmerited.”

### JEHOVAH’S GENEROUS GIFT

<sup>3</sup> The Scriptures speak of “the free gift of God’s undeserved kindness.” (Eph. 3:7) Why and how does Jehovah bestow this “free gift”? If we met all of Jehovah’s requirements perfectly, his kindness toward us would be deserved. As it is, we fail to do so. Thus, wise King Solomon wrote: “There is no righteous man on earth who always does good and never sins.” (Eccl. 7:20) The apostle Paul likewise stated: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” and “the wages sin pays is death.” (Rom. 3:23; 6:23a) That is what we deserve.

<sup>4</sup> Jehovah, however, expressed his love toward fallen mankind in an incomparable act of undeserved kindness. He sent his greatest gift of all, “his only-begotten Son,” to earth to die in our behalf. (John 3:16) So Paul wrote concerning Jesus that he is “now crowned with glory and honor for having suffered death, so that by God’s undeserved kindness he might taste death for everyone.” (Heb. 2:9) Yes, “the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. 6:23b.

<sup>5</sup> How did humans inherit the sinful,

dying condition that plagues us all? The Bible explains: “By the trespass of the one man [Adam] death ruled as king” over Adam’s descendants. (Rom. 5:12, 14, 17) Happily, though, we can choose no longer to be ruled, or dominated, by sin. By exercising faith in Christ’s ransom sacrifice, we place ourselves under the rule of Jehovah’s undeserved kindness. How so? “Where sin abounded, undeserved kindness abounded still more. To what end? So that just as sin ruled as king with death, so also undeserved kindness might rule as king through righteousness leading to everlasting life through Jesus Christ.”—Rom. 5:20, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Even though we remain sinners, we need not resign ourselves to having sin dominate our lives. When we do give in to sin, we will ask Jehovah for his forgiveness. Paul warned Christians: “Sin must not be master over you, seeing that you are not under law but under undeserved kindness.” (Rom. 6:14) Therefore, we come under the rule of undeserved kindness. With what result? Paul explained: “The undeserved kindness of God . . . trains us to reject ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things.”—Titus 2:11, 12.

### UNDESERVED KINDNESS “EXPRESSED IN VARIOUS WAYS”

<sup>7</sup> The apostle Peter wrote: “To the extent that each one has received a gift, use it in ministering to one another as fine stewards of God’s undeserved kindness that is expressed in various ways.”

3, 4. Why and how has Jehovah shown undeserved kindness toward all mankind?

5, 6. What are the results when we are ruled (a) by sin? (b) by undeserved kindness?

7, 8. What does it mean that Jehovah’s undeserved kindness is “expressed in various ways”? (See opening pictures.)

(1 Pet. 4:10) What does that mean? That whatever the nature of the trials we may face in life, Jehovah can enable us to cope with them. (1 Pet. 1:6) There will always be an expression of God's kindness that will match each trial.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Jehovah's undeserved kindness is expressed in various ways. The apostle John wrote: "We all received from his fullness, even undeserved kindness upon undeserved kindness." (John 1:16) The various expressions of Jehovah's kindness result in our receiving many blessings. What are some of them?

<sup>9</sup> *Being forgiven of our sins.* Because of Jehovah's undeserved kindness, we have our sins forgiven, provided we repent and continue to put up a hard fight against our sinful inclinations. **(Read 1 John 1:8, 9.)** God's mercy should fill us with gratitude and move us to glorify him. Writing to fellow anointed Christians, Paul stated: "[Jehovah] rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, by means of whom we have our release by ransom, the forgiveness of our sins." (Col. 1:13, 14) Being forgiven of our sins opens the door to many other wonderful blessings.

<sup>10</sup> *Having a peaceful relationship with God.* In our sinful state, from birth we were enemies of God. Paul acknowledged this: "When we were enemies we became reconciled to God through the death of his Son." (Rom. 5:10) This reconciliation enables us to be at peace with Jehovah. Paul links this

privilege to Jehovah's undeserved kindness, stating: "Now that we [Christ's anointed brothers] have been declared righteous as a result of faith, let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have obtained access by faith into this undeserved kindness in which we now stand." (Rom. 5:1, 2) What a blessing this is!

<sup>11</sup> *Being brought to righteousness.* All of us are unrighteous by nature. But the prophet Daniel foretold that during the time of the end, "those having insight," the anointed remnant, would be "bringing the many to righteousness." **(Read Daniel 12:3.)** By their preaching and teaching work, they have brought millions of "other sheep" into a righteous standing before Jehovah. (John 10:16) However, this has been possible only through Jehovah's undeserved kindness. Paul explained: "It is as a free gift that they are being declared righteous by his [God's] undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus." —Rom. 3:23, 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Approaching God's throne through prayer.* Jehovah in his undeserved kindness grants us the blessing of approaching his heavenly throne in prayer. In fact, Paul calls Jehovah's throne "the throne of undeserved kindness" and invites us to approach it "with freedom of speech." (Heb. 4:16a) Jehovah has afforded us this privilege through his Son, "by means of whom we have this freeness of speech and free access

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9. How do we benefit from Jehovah's undeserved kindness, and how can we show our gratitude for it?

10. What do we enjoy because of God's undeserved kindness?

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11. How do the anointed bring the "other sheep" to righteousness?

12. How is prayer related to God's undeserved kindness?

with confidence through our faith in him.” (Eph. 3:12) Free access to Jehovah in prayer is indeed a wonderful expression of his undeserved kindness.

<sup>13</sup> *Finding help at the right time.* Paul encouraged us to approach Jehovah freely in prayer, “so that we may receive mercy and find undeserved kindness to help us at the right time.” (Heb. 4:16b) At any time that we are plagued with trials or turmoil in our life, we can cry out to Jehovah for his merciful help. Undeserving as we are, he answers our call, often through fellow Christians, “so that we may be of good courage and say: ‘Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’”—Heb. 13:6.

<sup>14</sup> *Receiving comfort for our hearts.* A great blessing that comes to us through

13. How can undeserved kindness “help us at the right time”?

14. How does Jehovah’s undeserved kindness benefit our hearts?

Jehovah’s undeserved kindness is comfort for a distressed heart. (Ps. 51:17) To Christians in Thessalonica, who were experiencing persecution, Paul wrote: “May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave everlasting comfort and good hope by means of undeserved kindness, comfort your hearts and strengthen you.” (2 Thess. 2:16, 17, ftn.) How comforting it is to be aware of the loving care that we receive from Jehovah because of his generous kindness!

<sup>15</sup> *Having the prospect of everlasting life.* As sinners, on our own we would have no hope. **(Read Psalm 49:7, 8.)** But Jehovah provides us with a wonderful hope. Jesus promised his followers: “This is the will of my Father, that everyone who recognizes the Son and exercises faith in him should have everlasting

15. Thanks to God’s undeserved kindness, what hope do we have?

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### Expressions of God’s undeserved kindness:

The privilege of hearing the good news  
(See paragraph 11)

The blessing of prayer  
(See paragraph 12)

Being helped at the right time  
(See paragraph 13)





life.” (John 6:40) Yes, the hope of eternal life is a gift, a wonderful expression of God’s undeserved kindness. Paul, who certainly appreciated that fact, said: “The undeserved kindness of God has been manifested, bringing salvation to all sorts of people.”—Titus 2:11.

### **DO NOT ABUSE GOD’S UNDESERVED KINDNESS**

<sup>16</sup> While undeserved kindness from Jehovah provides us with many blessings, we should not presumptuously think that he condones all conduct. Among the early Christians, there were some who attempted to “turn the undeserved kindness of . . . God into an excuse for brazen conduct.” (Jude 4) These unfaithful Christians apparently thought that they could sin and then count on Jehovah to forgive them. Worse still, they endeavored to entice their brothers to join them in their contemptuous ways. Even today, anyone doing that “has outraged the spirit of undeserved kindness.”—Heb. 10:29.

<sup>17</sup> Today, Satan has misled some Christians into thinking that they can presume on God’s mercy and commit sins with impunity. But while Jehovah is willing to forgive repentant sinners, he expects us to put up a strong fight against our sinful tendencies. He inspired Peter to write: “You, therefore, beloved ones, having this advance knowledge, be on your guard so that you may not be led astray with them by the error of the lawless people and fall from your own steadfastness. No, but go on growing in

the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” —2 Pet. 3:17, 18.

### **UNDESERVED KINDNESS BRINGS RESPONSIBILITIES**

<sup>18</sup> As grateful recipients of Jehovah’s kindness, we owe it to him and to our neighbor to use our gifts to honor God and benefit our fellow man. In what ways? Paul answers: “Since, then, we have gifts that differ according to the undeserved kindness given to us . . . if it is a ministry, let us be at this ministry; or the one who teaches, let him be at his teaching; or the one who encourages, let him give encouragement; . . . the one who shows mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” (Rom. 12:6-8) The undeserved kindness that Jehovah extends to us puts us under obligation to busy ourselves in the Christian ministry, to teach the Bible to others, to encourage fellow Christians, and to forgive any who may offend us.

<sup>19</sup> As grateful recipients of God’s generous love, we should be moved to do our utmost “to bear thorough witness to the good news of the undeserved kindness of God.” (Acts 20:24) This responsibility will be examined in detail in the following article.

18. Because of Jehovah’s undeserved kindness, what responsibilities do we have?

19. What responsibility of ours will be examined in the next article?

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#### **ENDNOTE:**

[1] (paragraph 2) See “Undeserved kindness” in the “Glossary of Bible Terms” in the revised *New World Translation*.

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16. How did some early Christians abuse God’s undeserved kindness?

17. What strong counsel did Peter give?



# Spread the Good News of Undeserved Kindness

*“Bear thorough witness to the good news of the undeserved kindness of God.”—ACTS 20:24.*

SONGS: 101, 84

## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What should Jehovah’s undeserved kindness motivate us to do?

How does the “good news of the Kingdom” highlight God’s undeserved kindness?

How will Jehovah show his undeserved kindness in the new world?

THE apostle Paul could honestly say: “[God’s] undeserved kindness to me was not in vain.” (**Read 1 Corinthians 15:9, 10.**) Paul was very much aware that he had neither earned nor deserved God’s great mercy, having been a former persecutor of Christians.

<sup>2</sup> Toward the end of his life, Paul wrote to his fellow worker Timothy: “I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who imparted power to me, because he considered me faithful by assigning me to a ministry.” (1 Tim. 1:12-14) What was that ministry? Paul told the elders of the congregation in Ephesus what it included, stating: “I do not consider my own life of any importance to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, *to bear thorough witness to the good news of the undeserved kindness of God.*” —Acts 20:24.

1, 2. How did the apostle Paul show that he was grateful for God’s undeserved kindness?

<sup>3</sup> What “good news” did Paul preach that highlighted Jehovah’s undeserved kindness? He told the Ephesian Christians: “You have heard about the stewardship of God’s undeserved kindness that was given to me for your sakes.” (Eph. 3:1, 2) Paul had been commissioned to spread the good news to non-Jews so that they too could be included among those called to be associated with Christ in the Messianic Kingdom government. **(Read Ephesians 3:5-8.)** In his zeal to perform his ministry, Paul set an excellent example for modern-day Christians and demonstrated that God’s undeserved kindness had not been shown to him “in vain.”

#### DOES GOD’S UNDESERVED KINDNESS MOTIVATE YOU?

<sup>4</sup> In this time of the end, Jehovah’s people have been commissioned to preach “this good news of the Kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations.” (Matt. 24:14) The message we spread is also “the good news of the undeserved kindness of God” because all the blessings we hope to receive under Kingdom rule come to us through Jehovah’s kindness expressed by means of Christ. (Eph. 1:3) Do we individually imitate Paul in showing gratitude for Jehovah’s undeserved kindness by zealously sharing in the ministry?—**Read Romans 1:14-16.**

<sup>5</sup> In the preceding article, we learned how we as sinners are benefiting from Jehovah’s undeserved kindness in many

ways. We therefore owe it to all people to do our utmost to make known to them how Jehovah is expressing his love and how they can benefit from it personally. What are some aspects of God’s undeserved kindness that we should help others to appreciate?

#### SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF THE RANSOM SACRIFICE

<sup>6</sup> In this permissive world, sin has all but lost its stigma, so that many are unaware of the need for redemption. At the same time, more and more people can see that a permissive lifestyle does not bring true happiness. Until they talk with Jehovah’s Witnesses, many do not understand what sin is, how it affects us, and what we need to do to be delivered from slavery to sin. Honesthearted ones are relieved to learn that Jehovah, out of his great love and undeserved kindness, sent his Son to earth to ransom us from sin and its consequence, death. —1 John 4:9, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Speaking of Jehovah’s beloved Son, Paul wrote: “By means of him [Jesus] we have the release by ransom through the blood of that one, yes, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his [Jehovah’s] undeserved kindness.” (Eph. 1:7) The ransom sacrifice of Christ is the greatest proof of God’s love for us and illustrates the richness of His undeserved kindness. What a relief it is to learn that if we exercise faith in the shed blood of Jesus, our sins will be forgiven and our conscience will be cleansed! (Heb. 9:14) Good news indeed to share with others!

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3. What special ministry was Paul given? (See opening picture.)

4, 5. Why can we say that the “good news of the Kingdom” is the same as the good news of “the undeserved kindness of God”?

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6, 7. When we explain the ransom to people, how are we spreading the good news of God’s undeserved kindness?

## HELP PEOPLE BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

<sup>8</sup> We have the responsibility to make known to our fellow humans that they can come into a friendly relationship with their Creator. Before humans exercise faith in Jesus' sacrifice, God considers them to be his enemies. The apostle John wrote: "The one who exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life; the one who disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him." (John 3:36) Happily, Christ's sacrifice makes reconciliation with God possible. Paul declared: "You who were once alienated and enemies because your minds were on the works that were wicked, he has now reconciled by means of that one's fleshly body through his death."—Col. 1:21, 22.

<sup>9</sup> Christ has given his anointed brothers on earth what Paul calls "the ministry of the reconciliation." In explaining this, Paul wrote to first-century anointed Christians: "All things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of the reconciliation, namely, that God was by means of Christ reconciling a world to himself, not counting their offenses against them, and he entrusted to us the message of the reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors substituting for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us. As substitutes for Christ, we beg: 'Become reconciled to God.'"—2 Cor. 5:18-20.

<sup>10</sup> The "other sheep" count it a privi-

8. Why do sinful humans need to be reconciled to God?

9, 10. (a) What responsibility did Christ give to his anointed brothers? (b) How do the "other sheep" help their anointed brothers?

lege to help their anointed brothers in this ministry. (John 10:16) Serving as Christ's envoys, as it were, they are having the biggest share in teaching people spiritual truth and helping them to develop a personal relationship with Jehovah. This is an important part of the work of bearing thorough witness to the good news of the undeserved kindness of God.

## SHARE THE GOOD NEWS THAT GOD HEARS PRAYERS

<sup>11</sup> Many people pray because it makes them feel good, but they do not really believe that God hears their prayers. They need to know that Jehovah is the "Hearer of prayer." The psalmist David wrote: "O Hearer of prayer, to you people of all sorts will come. My errors have overwhelmed me, but you cover over our transgressions."—Ps. 65:2, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus told his disciples: "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14:14) Obviously, "anything" means anything that is in harmony with Jehovah's will. John assures us: "This is the confidence that we have toward him, that no matter what we ask according to his will, he hears us." (1 John 5:14) How good it is to teach others that far from being a mere psychological crutch, prayer is a wonderful means of approaching Jehovah's "throne of undeserved kindness"! (Heb. 4:16) By teaching them to pray in the right way, to the right Person, and for the right things, we can help them draw close to Jehovah and find comfort during times of distress.—Ps. 4:1; 145:18.

11, 12. Why is it good news for people to learn that they can pray to Jehovah?



## UNDESERVED KINDNESS IN THE NEW SYSTEM OF THINGS

<sup>13</sup> Jehovah's undeserved kindness will reach beyond the end of the present wicked system of things. Referring to the extraordinary privilege that God has granted to the 144,000, who are called to reign with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom, Paul wrote: "God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, made us alive together with the Christ, even when we were dead in trespasses—by undeserved kindness you have been saved. Moreover, he raised us up together and seated us together in the heavenly places in union with Christ Jesus, so that in the coming systems of things he might demonstrate the surpassing riches of his undeserved kindness in his graciousness toward us in union with Christ Jesus."—Eph. 2: 4-7.

<sup>14</sup> It is difficult to imagine the wonders that Jehovah has in store for anointed Christians when they are seated on thrones to rule with Christ in heaven. (Luke 22:28-30; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:2) Toward them in particular, Jehovah will "demonstrate the surpassing riches of his undeserved kindness." They will make up "the New Jerusalem," the bride of Christ. (Rev. 3:12; 17:14; 21:2, 9, 10) They will share with Jesus in "the healing of the nations," directing obedient humans to the means to become free from the burden of sin and death and raising them to perfection. —**Read Revelation 22:1, 2, 17.**

13, 14. (a) What marvelous privileges will the anointed have in the future? (b) What wonderful work will the anointed do for mankind?

<sup>15</sup> At Ephesians 2:7, we read that God's demonstration of undeserved kindness would occur "in the coming systems of things." Doubtless, Jehovah's new system of things on earth will witness "the surpassing riches of his undeserved kindness." (Luke 18:29, 30) One of the greatest earthly demonstrations of Jehovah's marvelous kindness will be the resurrection of humans from "the Grave." (Job 14:13-15; John 5:28, 29) Faithful men and women of old who died before Christ's sacrificial death, as well as all those "other sheep" who die faithful during the last days, will be brought back to life to continue serving Jehovah.

<sup>16</sup> Millions of humans who died without knowing God will also be resurrected. They will be given an opportunity to submit to Jehovah's sovereignty. John wrote: "I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. The dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the Grave gave up the dead in them, and they were judged individually according to their deeds." (Rev. 20:12, 13) Of course, those resurrected will be required to learn how to apply the godly principles that are found in the Bible. In addition, they will have to follow new beneficial instructions that will be revealed in "the scrolls" outlining Jehovah's requirements for living in the new system of things. The revealing of

15, 16. How will Jehovah show his undeserved kindness toward the "other sheep" in the future?



Serve zealously  
as “fine stewards  
of God’s undeserved  
kindness.”—1 Pet. 4:10  
(See paragraphs 17-19)

the contents of these scrolls will be another demonstration of Jehovah’s undeserved kindness.

#### KEEP SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

<sup>17</sup> More than ever, our mission as the end nears is to preach the good news of the Kingdom! (Mark 13:10) Undeniably, the good news highlights Jehovah’s undeserved kindness. We should keep this in mind when we share in our witnessing work. Our objective when we preach is to honor Jehovah. We can do this by showing people that all the promises of new world blessings are expressions of Jehovah’s wonderful kindness.

<sup>18</sup> As we witness to others, we can explain that under Christ’s Kingdom rule, mankind will benefit from the full appli-

17. What should we keep in mind when sharing in our witnessing work?

18, 19. How do we glorify Jehovah’s undeserved kindness?

cation of the ransom sacrifice and will gradually be brought to perfection. The Bible says: “The creation itself will also be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21) This will be possible only through Jehovah’s extraordinary kindness.

<sup>19</sup> We have the privilege of sharing with all who will listen the thrilling promise that is found at Revelation 21: 4, 5: “[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.” And Jehovah, the one seated on the throne, says: “Look! I am making all things new.” He also says: “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” When we zealously preach this good news to others, we truly glorify Jehovah’s undeserved kindness!

## What is the meaning of the joining together of the two sticks described in Ezekiel chapter 37?

■ Jehovah gave Ezekiel a message of hope promising the unification of the nation of Israel after its being restored to the Promised Land. That message also foretells the unification of God's people that started to take place during the last days.

Jehovah told his prophet Ezekiel to write on two sticks. He was to write on one stick, "For Judah and for the people of Israel who are with him," and on the other one, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and all the house of Israel who are with him." The two sticks were to become "just one stick" in Ezekiel's hand.—Ezek. 37:15-17.



### THE JOINING OF THE TWO STICKS



#### ANCIENT TIMES

Two-tribe  
kingdom of Judah

Joined in 537 B.C.E.  
when representatives of  
both kingdoms returned  
to rebuild the temple

Ten-tribe  
kingdom of Israel

*The stick for Judah*



*The stick of Ephraim*

#### MODERN TIMES

The anointed

From 1919,  
God's people were  
gradually reorganized  
and reunited to serve  
as "one flock"

The other sheep

What is represented by the term “Ephraim”? The first king of the northern ten-tribe kingdom, Jeroboam, was from the tribe of Ephraim, which had become the dominant tribe. (Deut. 33:13, 17; 1 Ki. 11:26) This tribe came from Joseph’s son Ephraim. (Num. 1:32, 33) Joseph had received a special blessing from his father, Jacob. Therefore, it was appropriate that the stick representing the ten-tribe kingdom be called “the stick of Ephraim.” By the time Ezekiel recorded the prophecy about the two sticks, the northern kingdom of Israel had long since been taken captive by the Assyrians in 740 B.C.E. (2 Ki. 17:6) Thus, the majority of those Israelites were by that time scattered throughout the Babylonian Empire, which had supplanted the Assyrian Empire.

In 607 B.C.E., the southern two-tribe kingdom and perhaps any remaining ones from the northern kingdom were taken into exile in Babylon. The kings in the line of Judah had ruled these two tribes, and the priesthood was associated with them, for the priests served at the temple in Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 11:13, 14; 34:30) So it was fitting that the two-tribe kingdom would be represented by the stick that was “for Judah.”

When were these two symbolic sticks joined together? It was when the Israelites returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple in 537 B.C.E. Representatives of both the two-tribe kingdom and the ten-tribe kingdom returned together from exile. No longer was there a division between the sons of Israel. (Ezek. 37:21, 22) Once again, the Israelites worshipped Jehovah unitedly. This reconciliation had also been foretold by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.—Isa. 11:12, 13; Jer. 31:1, 6, 31.

What important truth about pure worship is highlighted by this prophecy? This: Jehovah will

cause his worshippers to “become one.” (Ezek. 37:18, 19) Has this promise of unity come true in our time? Yes. Initially, the prophecy began to be fulfilled in 1919 when God’s people were gradually reorganized and reunited. Satan’s attempts to divide them permanently had been thwarted.

At that time, the majority of those reunited had the hope of becoming kings and priests in heaven with Jesus. (Rev. 20:6) Symbolically, they were like the stick for Judah. However, as time progressed, more and more of those with an earthly hope started to join themselves to these spiritual Jews. (Zech. 8:23) They were like the stick for Joseph, and they did not have the hope of ruling with Christ.

Unitedly, both groups serve together today as Jehovah’s people under one King, Jesus Christ, who is spoken of prophetically as “my servant David.” (Ezek. 37:24, 25) Jesus prayed that all his followers would ‘be one, just as his Father is in union with him and he is in union with his Father.’\* (John 17:20, 21) Jesus also foretold that his little flock of anointed followers would “become one flock” with his “other sheep.” All of them would be under “one shepherd.” (John 10:16) How well Jesus’ words describe the spiritual unity of Jehovah’s people today no matter what hope they have for the future!

\* It is interesting to note the progression that Jesus used when he told the illustrations that became part of the sign of his presence. First, he referred to “the faithful and discreet slave,” the small group of anointed brothers who would take the lead. (Matt. 24:45-47) Then, he gave illustrations that applied primarily to all those with a heavenly hope. (Matt. 25:1-30) Finally, he spoke of those with an earthly hope who would support Christ’s brothers. (Matt. 25:31-46) Similarly, the modern-day fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy points first to what would happen to those with a heavenly hope. Although the ten-tribe kingdom does not usually picture those with the earthly hope, the unification described in this prophecy does remind us of the unity that exists between those with an earthly hope and those with a heavenly hope.



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