

FEBRUARY 2016

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
APRIL 4–MAY 1, 2016



COVER IMAGE:

BENIN

In Hétin, a village in a marshy area, most houses are on stilts and pirogues are the main means of transportation. The 215 publishers and 28 pioneers in three congregations there were delighted that 1,600 attended the Memorial in 2014

POPULATION

10,703,000

PUBLISHERS

12,167

REGULAR PIONEERS

1,492

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 LIFE STORY Jehovah Has Given Me Success in His Service

8 WEEK OF APRIL 4-10 Jehovah Called Him “My Friend”

13 WEEK OF APRIL 11-17 Imitate Jehovah’s Close Friends

These articles will help us to build a stronger friendship with Jehovah God. In the first article, we will focus on the example of Abraham. In the second, we will discuss the examples of Ruth, Hezekiah, and Jesus’ mother, Mary.

21 WEEK OF APRIL 18-24 Prove Yourself Loyal to Jehovah

26 WEEK OF APRIL 25–MAY 1 Learn From Jehovah’s Loyal Servants

In these articles, we will examine Bible accounts of King David and his contemporaries. These narratives illustrate principles that can help us to prove loyal to Jehovah in the face of challenging circumstances.

31 FROM OUR ARCHIVES

18 Keep On Serving Jehovah With Joy

**THE WATCHTOWER®**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH’S KINGDOM

This publication is not for sale.
It is provided as part of a worldwide
Bible educational work supported
by voluntary donations.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations
are from the modern-language *New World Translation*
of the *Holy Scriptures*.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) Issue 3 February 2016 is published monthly with an additional issue published in January, March, May, July, September, and November by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299, and by Watch Tower

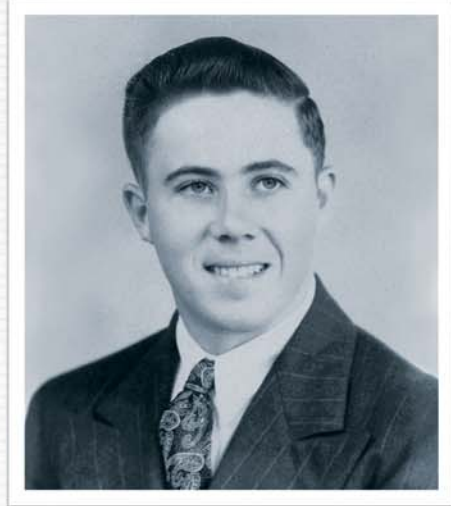
Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2016 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

February 2016
Vol. 137, No. 3 ENGLISH

Jehovah Has Given Me Success in His Service

AS TOLD BY CORWIN ROBISON

.....



I told the officer that I had already been in prison because I would not fight. I asked him: “Are you going to make me go through that again?” That exchange took place the second time I received a call to enter the United States Army.

I WAS born in 1926 in Crooksville, Ohio, in the United States. Father and Mother were not religious, but they told us eight children to go to church. I went to the Methodist Church. When I was 14, the minister gave me a prize because I had not missed Sunday services for a year.

About that time, a neighbor named Margaret Walker, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, began visiting my mother and talking to her about the Bible. One day, I decided to sit in. Mother thought that I would disrupt her study, so she told me to get out of the house. But I kept trying to listen to their discussions. After a couple more visits, Margaret asked me, “Do you know what God’s name is?” I said, “Everyone knows that—it’s God.” She said, “Get your Bible and look up Psalm 83:18.” I did, and I discovered that God’s name is Jehovah. I ran out to my friends and told them, “When you get home tonight, look up Psalm 83:18 in the Bible and see what God’s name is.” You might say I started witnessing right away.

I studied the Bible and got baptized in 1941. Soon afterward, I was assigned to conduct a congregation book study. I encouraged my mother and siblings to come, and they all began attending the book study that I conducted. Dad, though, was not interested.

OPPOSITION AT HOME

I was given more responsibility in the congregation, and I built up a theocratic library. One day, Dad pointed to my books and said: “You see all that stuff? I want it out of this house, and you can go with it.” I moved out and got a room in nearby Zanesville, Ohio, but I traveled back and forth to encourage the family.

Dad tried to keep Mother from attending the meetings. Sometimes when she was on her way, he chased after her and pulled her back into the house. But she would just run out the other door and go to the meeting. I told Mother: “Don’t worry. He’ll get tired of running after you.” In time, Dad gave up trying to stop her, and she attended the meetings without a battle.

Margaret Walker (second sister from the left) helped me learn the truth



In 1943 our congregation began holding the Theocratic Ministry School, and I started giving student talks. The counsel I received after my parts on the school helped me to improve my speaking ability.

NEUTRALITY DURING WAR

By then, the nations were fighting World War II. In 1944, I was called up for military service. I reported to Fort Hayes in Columbus, Ohio, underwent a physical examination, and filled out paperwork. I also told the officials that I would not become a soldier. They let me go. Days later, an officer came to my door and told me: “Corwin Robison, I have a warrant for your arrest.”

In court two weeks later, the judge said: “If it were up to me, I’d give you a life sentence. Do you have anything to say?” I replied: “Your Honor, I should have been classified as a minister. Everyone’s doorstep is my pulpit, and I have preached the good news of the Kingdom to many people.” The judge told the jury: “You are not here to decide whether this young man is a minister or not. You are here to decide whether he reported for induction into the army or not.” In less than half an hour, the jury came back with a verdict—guilty. The judge sentenced me to five years in the federal penitentiary in Ashland, Kentucky.

JEHOVAH PROTECTS ME IN PRISON

I spent the first two weeks in a prison in Columbus, Ohio, and stayed in my cell the first day. I prayed to Jehovah: “I cannot stay in a cell for five years. I don’t know what to do.”

The next day, the guards let me out. I walked over to a tall, broad-shouldered prisoner, and we stood there looking out a window. He asked me, “What are you in for, Shorty?” I said, “I am one of Jehovah’s Wit-



I was among the Witnesses imprisoned for neutrality at Ashland, Kentucky

nesses.” He said, “You are? So why are you here?” I said, “Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t go to war and kill people.” He said, “They put you in prison because you won’t kill people. They put other guys in prison because they kill people. Does that make sense?” I said, “No, it doesn’t.”

Then he said, “For 15 years I was in another prison, where I read some of your literature.” I prayed, “Jehovah, help me get this man on my side.” At that moment, Paul—that was his name—said: “If any of these guys touch you, just yell. I’ll take care of them.” As things turned out, I had no problems with the 50 inmates in that section.

When the prison officials moved me to Ashland, I found that a number of mature brothers were already there. Their association helped me and others to remain spiritually strong. They assigned us a weekly Bible reading, and we prepared questions and answers for meetings called Bible Bees. There was also an appointed territory servant. We were in a large dormitory that had beds along the walls. The territory servant would tell me: “Robison, you are responsi-

ble for bed such and such. Anyone assigned to that bed is your territory. Make sure you witness to him before he leaves.” That is how we preached in an organized way.

WHAT I FOUND OUTSIDE OF PRISON

World War II ended in 1945, but I stayed in prison for some time thereafter. I worried about my family because Dad had told me, “If I can get rid of you, I can handle the rest.” After my release, I had a pleasant surprise. Despite Dad’s opposition, seven in the family were attending meetings and one of my sisters was baptized.

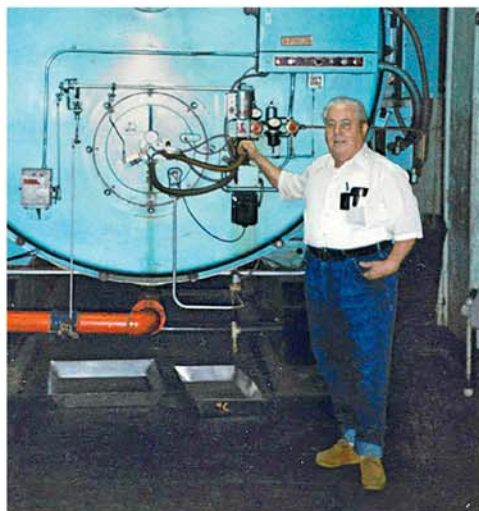
When the Korean War broke out in 1950, I was called to enter the army a second time and reported to Fort Hayes. After I took an aptitude test, an officer told me, “You had one of the highest scores in your group.” I said, “That’s fine, but I am not going into the army.” I quoted 2 Timothy 2:3 and said, “I am already a soldier of Christ.” After a long silence, he said, “You can leave.”

Soon afterward, I attended the Bethel meeting at a convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. Brother Milton Henschel told us that



Heading out to the ministry with Demetrius Papageorge, an anointed brother who began serving Jehovah in 1913

Caring for the boilers in the office complex at Brooklyn Bethel



if a brother wanted to work hard for the Kingdom, the organization could use him at Bethel. I applied for Bethel service, was accepted, and reported to Brooklyn Bethel in August 1954. I have been at Bethel ever since.

I have never lacked for work at Bethel. For several years, I operated the boilers in the printery and the office complex, worked as a machinist, and repaired locks. I also worked at Assembly Halls in New York City.

I have come to love the spiritual routine of Bethel life, which includes attendance at morning worship and the family *Watchtower* Study as well as participation in the ministry with the congregation. When you think about it, those features can and should be present in any family of Jehovah's Witnesses. When parents and children consider the daily text together, have regular Family Worship sessions, and are deeply involved in the congregation meetings and

the preaching of the good news, all in the family will likely be spiritually healthy.

I have made many friends at Bethel and in the congregation. Some were of the anointed and have gone on to their heavenly reward. Others were not. But all of Jehovah's servants—including Bethelites—are imperfect. If I have a run-in with a brother, I always try to make peace. I think of Matthew 5:23, 24 and how we are expected to handle our disagreements. Apologizing is not easy, but rarely have I seen problems with a friend continue after I have said I am sorry.

GOOD RESULTS FROM MY SERVICE

Because of my age, I now have a hard time going from door to door, but I have not given up. I have learned a little Mandarin Chinese and enjoy approaching Chinese people on the street. Some mornings I place 30 or 40 magazines with interested ones.

I have even made a return visit in China! One day, a bright young girl smiled at me as she passed out advertisements for a fruit stand. I smiled and offered her *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* in Chinese. She took them and told me that her name was Katie. After that, whenever she saw me, Katie came over to talk to me. I taught her the names of fruits and vegetables in English, and she repeated the words after me. I also explained Bible texts to her, and she accepted the *Bible Teach* book. After some weeks, though, she disappeared.

Months later, another girl who was passing out advertisements accepted the magazines I offered her. The next week, she handed me her cell phone and said, “You talk to China.” I said, “I don’t know anybody in China.” But she insisted, so I took the phone and said, “Hello, this is Robison.” The voice at the other end said, “Robby, this is Katie. I’m back in China.” I said, “China?” Katie answered, “Yes. Robby, you know that girl who handed you the phone?”

She’s my sister. You taught me many good things. Please teach her the way you taught me.” I said, “Katie, I will do the best I can. Thanks for letting me know where you are.” Soon afterward, I spoke to Katie’s sister for the last time. Wherever those two girls are, I hope that they learn more about Jehovah.

Rendering sacred service to Jehovah has been my work for 73 years. I am happy that he helped me to remain neutral and to be faithful in prison. Also, my brothers and sisters tell me that they took courage when I faced Dad’s opposition without giving up. Mother and six of my siblings eventually got baptized. Even Dad softened, and he attended some meetings before he passed away.

If it is God’s will, my family members and friends who have died will return to life in the new world. Imagine our joy as we worship Jehovah for all time to come with those whom we love!*

* While this article was being prepared for publication, Corwin Robison died faithful to Jehovah.

Preaching to the Chinese people in Brooklyn, New York





Jehovah Called Him “My Friend”

“You, O Israel, are my servant, you, O Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham my friend.”—ISA. 41:8.

SONGS: 91, 22

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How did knowledge
and experience strengthen
Abraham's faith?

What did Abraham
do to strengthen his
friendship with God?

How can you imitate
Abraham in building a
friendship with Jehovah?

FROM the cradle to the grave, our greatest need is love. Humans do need and crave love—and not just the romantic kind. We hunger for friendship and connection with others. But there is one kind of love that we need more than any other—Jehovah's love. Many find it hard to imagine that humans could acquire a close, loving friendship with Almighty God, an invisible Spirit in heaven. Do we share such skepticism? Far from it!

² The Bible shows that imperfect humans have become friends with God. Their examples are worth contemplating, for building such a friendship is the most worthwhile goal we could pursue in life. An outstanding example of a man who cultivated such a friendship was Abraham. **(Read James 2: 23.)** How did Abraham draw so close to Jehovah? A key ingredient in that friendship was faith. In fact, the Bible calls

1, 2. (a) How do we know that humans can become God's friends?
(b) What will we consider in this article?

Abraham “the father of all those having faith.” (Rom. 4:11) So let us see how Abraham’s faith led him to a close friendship with God. And each of us may well ask, ‘How can I imitate Abraham’s faith and strengthen my friendship with Jehovah?’

HOW DID ABRAHAM BECOME JEHOVAH’S FRIEND?

³ Picture an elderly man trudging up a mountainside. He is making what must be the hardest journey of his life. It is not his age that makes this trek so daunting. Abraham may be about 125 years old, but he is still vigorous.^[1] Following him is a younger man, perhaps 25 years of age. It is his son Isaac, who is carrying firewood. Abraham has a knife and the means to start a fire. Jehovah has asked him to sacrifice his own son!—Gen. 22:1-8.

⁴ Abraham was facing what was likely the greatest test of his faith. There are those who say that God was cruel for asking such a thing of Abraham, and some imply that Abraham’s obedience was blind and unfeeling. They take that position because they have neither the faith nor the understanding of how faith works. (1 Cor. 2:14-16) Abraham did not obey God blindly. Instead, he obeyed because he could see. With eyes of genuine faith, he saw that his heavenly Father, Jehovah, never asks His faithful servants to do anything that will result in their lasting harm. Abraham *knew* that if he obeyed Jehovah, his God would bless him and his beloved son. On what was that faith based? On knowledge and experience.

3, 4. (a) Describe what was likely Abraham’s greatest test of faith. (b) Why was Abraham willing to sacrifice Isaac?

⁵ *Knowledge.* Though he grew up in Ur, a Chaldean city rife with idolatry, Abraham came to know about Jehovah. How did that happen, considering that his own father, Terah, was an idolater? (Josh. 24:2) The Bible does not say specifically, but it reveals that Abraham was of the ninth generation descended from Shem, one of Noah’s sons and a man of great faith. Shem lived until Abraham was about 150 years old. We do not know for certain if Abraham learned about Jehovah from Shem. However, it seems safe to assume that Shem passed on to his family what he knew about Jehovah. Somehow that knowledge reached Abraham and touched his heart. He came to love the God he learned about, and that knowledge helped him to build faith.

⁶ *Experience.* How did Abraham acquire experience that strengthened his faith in Jehovah? It has been said that thoughts lead to feelings and feelings lead to actions. What Abraham learned about God produced in him a profound awe and heartfelt respect for “Jehovah the Most High God, Maker of heaven and earth.” (Gen. 14:22) The Bible calls that feeling “godly fear,” and it is essential to building a close friendship with God. (Heb. 5:7; Ps. 25:14) Such godly fear moved Abraham to action.

⁷ God directed elderly Abraham and Sarah to leave Ur and move to a foreign land. They would live in tents for the rest of their days. By obeying, Abraham opened the way for Jehovah to bless and protect him. For example,

5. How may Abraham have learned about Jehovah, and how did that knowledge make him feel?

6, 7. How did Abraham’s experiences strengthen his faith?

ABRAHAM'S FRIENDSHIP WITH JEHOVAH

Abraham and Sarah come to know and worship Jehovah



Abraham obeys God and leaves Ur

Jehovah protects Abraham and Sarah during their journey

Abraham obediently circumcises all males of his household

WHILE LIVING IN UR

EN ROUTE TO CANAAN

Abraham feared that his beautiful wife, Sarah, would be taken away from him and that he would be killed. His fears were well-founded, but Abraham did not let such concerns sidetrack him from obeying Jehovah. More than once, Jehovah stepped in and protected Abraham and Sarah, even doing so miraculously. (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:2-7, 10-12, 17, 18) Those experiences strengthened Abraham's faith.

⁸ Can we build a friendship with Jehovah? We can indeed! The needed knowledge and experience are readily available. Abraham had only a fraction of the abundant riches of wisdom now contained in the Bible. (Dan. 12:4; Rom. 11:33) God's Word is full of treasures that can deepen our knowledge about the "Maker of heaven and earth" and help us to build respect and love for him. As such feelings move us to obey God, we gain experience because we see how obeying him works out. We find that his counsel protects us and that he blesses and strengthens us. We learn that wholehearted service to God brings fulfillment, peace, and joy. (Ps. 34:8; Prov. 10:22) As we grow in such knowledge and experience, our faith in Jehovah and our friendship with him grow as well.

8. How can we gain knowledge and experience that will strengthen our friendship with Jehovah?

HOW ABRAHAM MAINTAINED HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

⁹ A friendship can be a precious treasure. (**Read Proverbs 17:17.**) However, friendship is not like an inanimate thing that we might purchase and then store somewhere to gather dust. Friendship is more like a living thing that needs care and sustenance if it is to thrive and flourish. Abraham cherished and maintained his friendship with Jehovah. How did he do so?

¹⁰ Abraham never came to feel that his past record of godly fear and obedience was enough. As he and his large household traveled into Canaan, he continued to let Jehovah guide him in making decisions, from the small to the great. A year before Isaac was born, when Abraham was 99 years old, Jehovah required that all males of Abraham's household be circumcised. Did Abraham question that command or look for some way out of complying with it? No, he trusted in God and obeyed "on that very day."—Gen. 17:10-14, 23.

¹¹ Because he made it a practice to

9, 10. (a) What is needed for a friendship to become stronger? (b) What shows that Abraham cherished and strengthened his friendship with Jehovah?

11. Why was Abraham concerned about Sodom and Gomorrah, and how did Jehovah help him?

Jehovah patiently listens to Abraham's concerns regarding Sodom

Jehovah enables elderly Abraham and Sarah to have a son

Showing great faith, Abraham is willing to sacrifice Isaac



Abraham dies "at a good old age, old and satisfied"



WHILE LIVING IN CANAAN

obey Jehovah even in seemingly minor matters, Abraham kept his friendship with God healthy and flourishing. He felt free to open his heart to Jehovah, asking for help as he struggled with hard questions. For example, when he learned that God was going to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham was concerned that righteous people might be swept away along with the wicked. Perhaps Abraham was worried about his nephew Lot and his family, who were then living in Sodom. Abraham asked his questions with great humility and trust in God, "the Judge of all the earth." Jehovah patiently taught Abraham how merciful He is, reading every heart and looking for righteous ones to preserve, even in times of judgment.—Gen. 18:22-33.

¹² No doubt, every bit of knowledge and experience helped Abraham maintain his close friendship with Jehovah. Later, when he faced a challenging test—Jehovah's request that he sacrifice his son Isaac—Abraham was able to reflect on the kind of Person he knew his heavenly Friend to be. So let us return to that faithful man as he trudged up the slope in the land of Moriah. Did he believe that Jehovah would suddenly change

and become harsh and merciless? To Abraham, that was inconceivable! How do we know?

¹³ Before parting from the servants who accompanied them, Abraham said: "You stay here with the donkey, but *the boy and I* will go over there and worship and *return to you*." (Gen. 22:5) What did Abraham mean? Was he lying to his servants, telling them that Isaac would return when Abraham knew that Isaac was to be sacrificed? No. The Bible gives us some insight into what Abraham was thinking. **(Read Hebrews 11:19.)** Abraham "reasoned that God was able to raise [Isaac] up even from the dead." Yes, Abraham believed in the resurrection. He knew that Jehovah had revived his reproductive powers and those of Sarah in their old age. (Heb. 11:11, 12, 18) Abraham realized that nothing was impossible for Jehovah. So he was confident that whatever happened on that challenging day, his beloved son would be restored to him so that all of Jehovah's promises could be fulfilled. No wonder Abraham is called "the father of all those having faith"!

¹⁴ What about us? True, God does not make such requests of us today. But he does ask us to obey him even

12, 13. (a) How did Abraham's knowledge and experience help him later? (b) What shows that Abraham had confidence in Jehovah?

14. What challenges do you face in serving Jehovah, and how may Abraham's example help you?

when his commands are hard for us to comply with or we cannot comprehend the reasons for them. Can you think of something that God asks of you that you find difficult to do? For some, it may be the preaching work. Perhaps they struggle with shyness, making it hard for them to approach strangers with the good news. For others, it may be the challenge of standing out as different, perhaps at school or in the workplace. (Ex. 23:2; 1 Thess. 2:2) Do you ever feel like Abraham, as if you are trudging up that slope in Moriah, facing a task that seems beyond you? If you do, take courage from Abraham and his faith! Meditating on examples of faithful men and women can move us to imitate them and draw close to Jehovah as our Friend.—Heb. 12:1, 2.

A FRIENDSHIP THAT BRINGS BLESSINGS

¹⁵ Do you think that Abraham ever regretted his loyal obedience to Jehovah? Note how the Bible describes the end of his life: “Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, old and satisfied.” (Gen. 25:8) When Abraham was 175 years of age, his strength finally failed him, but he was able to look back with satisfaction on a life well lived. It was a life that remained centered on his friendship with Jehovah God. However, when we read that Abraham was “old and satisfied,” let us not conclude that he had had his fill of life, so to speak, and had no desire to live in the future.

¹⁶ The Bible says of Abraham: “He was awaiting the city having real founda-

tions, whose designer and builder is God.” (Heb. 11:10) Abraham believed that one day he would see that city, the Kingdom of God, ruling over this earth—and he will! Can you imagine how thrilled Abraham will be to live in the earthly Paradise and go on strengthening his friendship with Jehovah? How touched he will be to learn that his example of faith helped Jehovah’s servants throughout thousands of years after his death! In Paradise he will even learn that the way Isaac was restored to him was “illustrative” of something far greater. (Heb. 11:19) And he will learn that the pain he suffered as he prepared to sacrifice Isaac has helped millions of faithful people to imagine Jehovah’s own pain as he provided his Son, Jesus Christ, as the ransom. (John 3:16) Abraham’s example has helped us all to have even more appreciation for the ransom, the greatest act of love ever performed in all history!

¹⁷ May each of us be determined to imitate the faith of Abraham. As we continue to get to know Jehovah better, we establish a record of integrity with him and gain more experience with respect to the rewards of loyal service to him. **(Read Hebrews 6:10-12.)** May Jehovah be our Friend forever! In the following article, we will consider three more examples of faithful ones who became close friends of God.

17. What is your determination, and what will we consider in the following article?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 3) This man and his wife were originally called Abram and Sarai, but in this article we will refer to them by the names Jehovah later gave them—Abraham and Sarah.

15. Why may we be sure that Abraham never regretted his loyal obedience to Jehovah?

16. What joys will Abraham experience in Paradise?



Imitate Jehovah's Close Friends

"Close friendship with Jehovah belongs to those who fear him."—PS. 25:14.

THREE times the Bible identifies Abraham as God's friend. (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23) In fact, that faithful man is the only person specifically referred to that way in the Bible. Should we assume, then, that Abraham was the only human ever to become Jehovah's friend? No, for the Bible shows that friendship with God is something that each of us can attain.

² God's Word teems with accounts of faithful men and women who feared Jehovah, put faith in him, and became his close friends. **(Read Psalm 25:14.)** The apostle Paul wrote of "a great cloud of witnesses," all of whom surely were God's friends. (Heb. 12:1) Among them we find a delightful variety of people.

³ Let us take a close look at three of Jehovah's close friends described in the inspired record. We will consider (1) Ruth, the loyal young widow from Moab; (2) Hezekiah, a righteous king of Judah; and (3) Mary, the humble mother of Jesus. What can we learn from the way that each of them cultivated a friendship with God?

-
- 1-3. (a) Why can we be sure that we can become God's friends?
(b) What individuals will we consider in this article?

SONGS: 106, 118

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What can we learn from the friendship with God that Ruth enjoyed?

Why was King Hezekiah a close friend of Jehovah?

What qualities made Jesus' mother, Mary, a friend of Jehovah God?

SHE SHOWED LOYAL LOVE

⁴ Picture three widows, their garments blowing in the wind as they walk on a road stretching across the plains of Moab. They are Naomi and her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. We see Orpah walk away, for she has decided to go back to her home in Moab. Naomi is determined to press on to her homeland, Israel. With her is Ruth, who faces what may be the most important decision of her life. She can either go home to her people in Moab or stick with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and travel to Bethlehem.—Ruth 1:1-8, 14.

⁵ Ruth could easily have reasoned that she had a family there in Moab—a mother and other relatives who would take a young widow in and help provide for her. Moab was her homeland. Its culture was her culture, its language her language, its people her people. Naomi could promise her no such advantages in Bethlehem. In fact, she advised Ruth to stay in Moab. Naomi feared that she could provide neither a husband nor a home for her daughters-in-law. What would Ruth do? Note the contrast between her and Orpah, who “returned to her people *and her gods*.” (Ruth 1:9-15) Did Ruth want to return to the false gods of her people? No, she did not.

⁶ It seems that Ruth had come to know about Jehovah God, perhaps from her late husband or from Naomi. Jehovah was not like the gods of Moab. Ruth knew that Jehovah deserved her love and worship. Knowledge, though, was

not enough. Ruth had to make a decision. Would she choose Jehovah as her God? Ruth made a wise choice. “Your people will be my people,” she told Naomi, “and your God my God.” (Ruth 1:16) Ruth’s love for Naomi is heartwarming to think about, but far more important was her love for Jehovah. The landowner Boaz later praised Ruth for seeking refuge under Jehovah’s wings. **(Read Ruth 2:12.)** That may remind us of a baby bird taking refuge under the wings of a powerful, protective parent. (Ps. 36:7; 91:1-4) Jehovah became such a parent to Ruth. He rewarded her for her faith, and she never had any reason to regret her decision.

⁷ Many learn about Jehovah but hesitate to take refuge in him. They hold back from becoming his dedicated, baptized servants. If you hesitate to make a dedication to Jehovah, have you stopped to ask yourself why? Everyone alive serves some god or other. (Josh. 24:15) Why not take refuge in the only God worth serving? Making a dedication to Jehovah is an excellent way to demonstrate faith in him. He will help you live up to that decision and face whatever challenges may arise. That is what God did for Ruth.

“HE HELD FAST TO JEHOVAH” —DESPITE HIS BACKGROUND

⁸ Unlike Ruth, young Hezekiah was born into a nation that was dedicated to Jehovah. But not all Israelites lived up to that dedication. Hezekiah’s father, King Ahaz, is a case in point. That wicked man led the kingdom of Judah into idolatry, even desecrating Jehovah’s temple

4, 5. What difficult decision did Ruth have to make, and why was making it so hard? (See opening picture.)

6. (a) What wise choice did Ruth make? (b) Why did Boaz speak of Ruth as seeking refuge under Jehovah’s wings?

7. What might help those who hesitate to dedicate their lives to Jehovah?

8. Describe Hezekiah’s background.

in Jerusalem. It is hard to imagine Hezekiah's childhood, for some of his brothers met a horrible death, being burned alive as sacrifices to a false god!—2 Ki. 16: 2-4, 10-17; 2 Chron. 28:1-3.

⁹ Hezekiah might easily have grown up to be a bitter, angry man who turned against God. Others who have endured far less hardship have thought that they had valid reason to become “enraged against Jehovah” or embittered toward his organization. (Prov. 19:3) And some people are convinced that their unwholesome family background dooms them to lead a bad life, perhaps to repeat their parents' mistakes. (Ezek. 18:2, 3) Are such notions correct?

¹⁰ Hezekiah's life record gives us a resounding answer: Absolutely not! There is never a valid reason to become embittered against Jehovah, for he is not

9, 10. (a) Why might Hezekiah easily have become bitter? (b) Why should we not become bitter against God? (c) Why should we not think that our background determines the type of person we will become?

the source of the evils that befall people in this wicked world. (Job 34:10) True, parents can exert a strong influence on their children for good or for bad. (Prov. 22:6; Col. 3:21) But this does not mean that a person's family background determines his course in life. On the contrary, Jehovah has given all of us a precious gift—the ability to choose what we will do and who we will be. (Deut. 30:19) How did Hezekiah use that gift?

¹¹ Although Hezekiah was the son of one of Judah's worst kings, he grew up to be one of the very best. (**Read 2 Kings 18:5, 6.**) Yes, his father was a terrible influence, but there were other influences to choose from. Isaiah served as a prophet in those days, as did Micah and Hosea. We can imagine King Hezekiah deeply absorbed in the inspired declarations of such faithful men, allowing Jehovah's counsel and correction to sink into his heart. So Hezekiah set about righting

11. What made Hezekiah one of Judah's best kings?

Many young people
accept the truth despite
their family background
(See paragraphs 9, 10)



the terrible wrongs that his father had committed. He did so by cleansing the temple, atoning for the people's sins, and destroying pagan idols in a vigorous and far-reaching campaign. (2 Chron. 29:1-11, 18-24; 31:1) When he faced daunting challenges, such as the threat of attack on Jerusalem by the Assyrian king Sennacherib, Hezekiah showed profound courage and faith. He relied on God for salvation and strengthened his people by word and example. (2 Chron. 32:7, 8) Later, when Hezekiah needed correction for showing a haughty attitude, he humbled himself and repented. (2 Chron. 32:24-26) Clearly, Hezekiah did not let his past ruin his present or deprive him of a future. Rather, he showed that he was Jehovah's friend and a fine example to imitate.

¹² Since we live in a fierce, loveless world, it is no surprise that many children have to grow up without the benefit of loving, protective parents. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Many Christians today come from painful family backgrounds, but they have built close friendships with Jehovah. Like Hezekiah, they show that a person's past does not have to determine his future. God has dignified us with the gift of free will, and it is our privilege to use that gift to hold fast to Jehovah and to bring him honor and glory, as Hezekiah did.

**SHE SAID:
“LOOK! JEHOVAH’S SLAVE GIRL!”**

¹³ Centuries after Hezekiah's day, a humble young Jewish woman from Naz-

12. Like Hezekiah, how have many today proved to be Jehovah's friends?

13, 14. Why might Mary's assignment have seemed too difficult, yet how did she respond to Gabriel's words?



“Look! Jehovah's slave girl!”
(See paragraphs 13, 14)

areth developed a unique friendship with Jehovah. No other human has ever received a comparable assignment. She was to conceive, give birth to, and raise the only-begotten Son of God! Imagine what confidence Jehovah must have had in Mary, the daughter of Heli, in order to place such a remarkable trust in her. But how might the prospect of that assignment have struck Mary at first?

¹⁴ It is easy to think only of Mary's wonderful privilege and fail to consider some of the practical concerns that might have seemed daunting. God's angel Gabriel told her that she would become pregnant miraculously—without having relations with a man. Gabriel did not offer to go to Mary's family and neighbors to explain the cause of her pregnancy. What would they think? Mary must have been concerned about her fiancé, Joseph. How could she convince him that, although she was pregnant, she

had remained faithful to him? Moreover, what a responsibility it would be to raise, care for, and train the only-begotten Son of the Most High! We cannot know all the concerns that may have raced through Mary's mind when Gabriel spoke to her. However, we do know that she answered: "Look! Jehovah's slave girl! May it happen to me according to your declaration."—Luke 1:26-38.

¹⁵ Is Mary's faith not remarkable? A slave girl was at her master's disposal. Mary thus entrusted her care and choices to her Master, Jehovah. She wanted to serve him in whatever way he saw fit. Where did her faith come from? Faith is not inborn. It is the product of a person's effort and God's blessing. (Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:8) Is there evidence that Mary put forth effort to strengthen her faith? There is. Consider how she listened and how she spoke.

¹⁶ *How Mary listened.* The Bible advises us to "be quick to listen, slow to speak." (Jas. 1:19) Was Mary a good listener? Evidently so. Twice Luke's Gospel shows us that Mary paid careful attention to words that had deep spiritual meaning, and later she made time to meditate on what she had heard. At the time of Jesus' birth, humble shepherds revealed an angelic message to Mary. Some 12 years later, though still a boy, Jesus said something of great spiritual significance. In both cases, Mary listened, remembered, and thought carefully about what she had heard.—**Read Luke 2:16-19, 49, 51.**

¹⁷ *How Mary spoke.* Not many of Mary's

words are recorded in the Bible. By far, her longest speech is found at Luke 1:46-55. Those words reveal that Mary knew the inspired Scriptures well. Her words seem to echo some that were spoken in prayer by Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel. (1 Sam. 2:1-10) By one estimate, Mary made some 20 references to the Scriptures in her speech. Clearly, she was a woman who spoke freely about spiritual things. Mary drew liberally from the treasure trove in her heart, a storehouse of precious truths that she had learned from her greatest Friend, Jehovah God.

¹⁸ Like Mary, we may at times find that we receive assignments from Jehovah that seem challenging. Like her, let us humbly put ourselves in Jehovah's hands, trusting in him to act in our best interests. We can imitate Mary's faith by listening carefully to what we are learning about Jehovah and his purposes, by meditating on spiritual truths, and by joyously telling others about what we have learned.—Ps. 77:11, 12; Luke 8:18; Rom. 10:15.

¹⁹ Who could doubt that Ruth, Hezekiah, and Mary were Jehovah's friends, much as Abraham had been before them? They, along with all those who make up the "great cloud of witnesses" and many other faithful ones throughout history, have enjoyed the wonderful privilege of being friends of God. May we continue to imitate such examples of faith. (Heb. 6:11, 12) As we do so, we may be assured of a great reward—being Jehovah's close friends forever!

15. Why is Mary's faith remarkable?

16. What shows that Mary was a good listener?

17. What can we learn about Mary from the way she spoke?

18. In what ways can we imitate Mary's faith?

19. As we imitate the Bible's outstanding examples of faith, of what may we be assured?

Keep On Serving Jehovah With Joy



THINK about the happiest day of your life. Was it when you got married or when your first child was born? Or was it the day you symbolized your dedication to Jehovah by water baptism? You may well consider that to have been your most important and joyful day. And how glad your fellow believers were to see you give public evidence that you love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength!—Mark 12:30.

Very likely, you have experienced much joy in serving Jehovah since your baptism. However, some Kingdom proclaimers have lost a measure of the joy they once had. Why has this happened? What reasons do we have for continuing to serve Jehovah with joy?

WHY SOME HAVE LOST THEIR JOY

The Kingdom message—with its promise that Jehovah will soon bring an end to the present wicked system and usher in his new world—surely gives us reason to be joyful. Moreover, Zephaniah 1:14 assures us: “The great day of Jehovah is near! It is near and it is approaching very quickly!” Yet, having to wait longer than we ex-

pected could rob us of the joy we once had and cause us to slow down in rendering sacred service to God.—Prov. 13:12.

Wholesome association with God’s people provides us with the incentive to keep on serving Jehovah with joy. In fact, the fine conduct of Jehovah’s servants may have attracted us to true worship and helped us to begin to serve God joyfully. (1 Pet. 2:12) But what could happen if a fellow Christian is disciplined because of his failure to live up to God’s standards? Under such circumstances, some who were drawn to the truth because of the godly behavior of Jehovah’s people could become discouraged and lose their joy.

The commercial propaganda of Satan’s wicked system of things can also rob us of our joy. The Devil uses his world to make us believe that we need things that actually are unnecessary. However, we do well to remember Jesus’ words: “No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other. You cannot slave for God and for Riches.” (Matt. 6:24) We



Héctor maintains his joy by remembering his Kingdom hope and staying active



cannot serve Jehovah with joy and at the same time try to get all that we can out of this world.

‘JOYFUL IN THE GOD OF OUR SALVATION’

Serving Jehovah is not burdensome for those who love him. (1 John 5:3) Remember that Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for yourselves. For my yoke is kindly, and my load is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30) Taking on the yoke of Christian discipleship is refreshing and results in joy. And we certainly have cause for great happiness in Jehovah’s service. Let us now consider three important reasons why we can be ‘joyful in the God of our salvation.’—Hab. 3:18.

We serve our Life-Giver, the happy God. (Acts 17:28; 1 Tim. 1:11) We realize that we owe our very existence to our Creator. Hence, we continue to serve him with joy, regardless of how many years have gone by since we got baptized.

Consider Héctor, who served Jehovah as a traveling overseer for 40 years. “Even in old age” he is thriving. (Ps. 92:12-14) His wife’s illness has limited Héctor’s activity in God’s service, but it has not dampened his joy. He says: “Although it is sad to see my wife’s health gradually deteriorate and it has been challenging to care for her, I have not allowed this to rob me of my joy in serving the true God. Knowing that I owe my life to Jehovah, who created man for a purpose, is reason enough to love him deeply and serve him wholeheartedly. I strive to stay active in the preaching work, and I try to keep the Kingdom



Jesús simplified his life and served Jehovah joyfully for years

hope foremost in my mind so as not to lose my joy.”

Jehovah has provided the ransom sacrifice, making it possible for us to have a joyful life. Indeed, “God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) Yes, our sins can be forgiven and we can have everlasting life on the basis of faith in God’s loving provision of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. Is that not an excellent reason to be grateful? And should not our gratitude for the ransom motivate us to serve Jehovah joyfully?

A brother in Mexico named Jesús said: “I was a slave to my job, at times working five consecutive



shifts, even though it was not obligatory to do so. I did it just to make more money. Then I learned about Jehovah and how he had given his dear Son for mankind. I had an intense desire to serve him. So I dedicated my life to Jehovah, and after having worked for the company for 28 years, I decided to quit and take up the full-time ministry.” That was the beginning of years of joyful service to Jehovah.

The fruit that we produce results, not in sorrow, but in great joy. Do you remember what your life was like before you came to know Jehovah? The apostle Paul reminded Christians in Rome that they “were once the slaves of sin” but had become “slaves to righteousness.” They were producing fruit “in the way of holiness,” which would end in everlasting life. (Rom. 6:17-22) We too follow a way of life that is holy, free of the sorrow resulting from morally unclean or violent conduct. What a cause for joy!

Consider the case of Jaime, an atheist and evolutionist who was involved in boxing. Jaime

began to attend Christian meetings and was impressed by the love shown there. To abandon his former ways, Jaime had to ask Jehovah to help him believe in Him. “Little by little, I discovered the existence of a loving Father and merciful God,” Jaime says. “Keeping Jehovah’s righteous standards has been a protection for me. Had I not changed, I might have been killed, as some of my former boxing friends were. The happiest years of my life have been those spent serving Jehovah.”

DO NOT GIVE UP!

How do you think we should feel as we await the end of this wicked system of things? Remember, we are “sowing with a view to the spirit” and will “reap everlasting life.” Therefore, “let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due time we will reap if we do not tire out.” (Gal. 6:8, 9) With Jehovah’s help, may we endure, work hard to cultivate the qualities needed for survival through “the great tribulation,” and continue to serve Jehovah with joy, even in the face of trials.—Rev. 7: 9, 13, 14; Jas. 1:2-4.

We can be confident that our endurance will be rewarded, for God is well-aware of our work and our love for him and his name. If we keep on serving Jehovah with joy, we will be like the psalmist David, who said: “I keep Jehovah before me constantly. Because he is at my right hand, I will never be shaken. So my heart rejoices, my whole being is joyful. And I reside in security.” —Ps. 16:8, 9.



“The happiest years of my life have been those spent serving Jehovah.”—Jaime



Prove Yourself Loyal to Jehovah

“May Jehovah be between you and me and between your offspring and my offspring forever.”

—1 SAM. 20:42.

JONATHAN must have been astonished by the way young David faced the giant Goliath. Now David stood before Jonathan’s father, King Saul of Israel, “with the head of the Philistine in his hand.” (1 Sam. 17:57) Jonathan probably admired David for his courage. It was clear that God was with David, and “Jonathan and David became bound together in close friendship.” In fact, they “made a covenant because [Jonathan] loved [David] as himself.” (1 Sam. 18:1-3) For the rest of his life, he was loyal to David.

² Jonathan’s attachment to David endured, even though God had chosen David to be Israel’s next king. Jonathan became concerned about David when Saul was seeking to kill him. To encourage his friend, Jonathan traveled into the Judean wilderness at Horesh. Jonathan helped David “find strength in Jehovah.” Jonathan said: “Do not be afraid . . . ;

1, 2. Why is Jonathan’s friendship with David a remarkable example of loyalty?

SONGS: 125, 62

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How was King Saul’s son Jonathan loyal to Jehovah?

How can we be loyal to God when we feel that someone who has authority does not deserve our respect?

How can we be loyal to Jehovah if others misunderstand us or treat us unfairly?

you will be king over Israel, and I will become second to you.”—1 Sam. 23:16, 17.

³ Loyalty is almost universally admired. However, we would miss a vital lesson if we were to admire Jonathan’s loyalty to David without taking into account his loyalty to God. Why did Jonathan view David as a friend rather than a rival? Evidently, something was more important to Jonathan than his own advancement. Remember that he helped David “find strength in Jehovah.” Clearly, then, loyalty to God had first place in Jonathan’s heart. Indeed, loyalty to Jehovah was the very basis for his loyalty to David. And both men loyally lived up to their sworn oath: “May Jehovah be between you and me and between your offspring and my offspring forever.”—1 Sam. 20:42.

⁴ As Christians, we do not merely admire loyalty in others; we ourselves are loyal to family members, friends, and fellow worshippers. (1 Thess. 2:10, 11) But what loyalty should take first place in our heart? Why, it is loyalty to the One who gave us life! (Rev. 4:11) Maintaining that loyalty gives us true joy and satisfaction. But if we are to prove loyal to God, we must stick to him even through difficult trials. In this article, we will consider how Jonathan’s example can help us to prove loyal to Jehovah in four challenging situations: (1) when someone in authority seems unworthy of respect, (2) when there is a conflict of loyalties, (3) when we are misunderstood or misjudged, and (4) when loyalty and personal interests clash.

3. What was more important to Jonathan than being loyal to David, and how do we know? (See opening picture.)

4. (a) What will make us truly happy and satisfied? (b) What will we consider in this article?

WHEN SOMEONE IN AUTHORITY SEEMS UNWORTHY OF RESPECT

⁵ Although God had anointed Saul, Jonathan’s father, to be king, Saul later became disobedient and was rejected by Jehovah. (1 Sam. 15:17-23) Since God did not immediately remove Saul from the throne, his misconduct tested his subjects and all who were close to him. They faced the challenge of being loyal to God while the king, who sat on “Jehovah’s throne,” followed a wayward course.—1 Chron. 29:23.

⁶ When Saul first manifested a disobedient spirit, his son Jonathan proved to be loyal to Jehovah. (1 Sam. 13:13, 14) The prophet Samuel had said: “For the sake of his great name, Jehovah will not abandon his people.” (1 Sam. 12:22) Jonathan showed that he believed this when a vast Philistine army with 30,000 war chariots threatened Israel. Saul had just 600 men—and only he and Jonathan had weapons! Yet, Jonathan approached a Philistine outpost with only his armor-bearer at his side. “Nothing can hinder Jehovah from saving by many or by few,” said Jonathan. The two Israelites struck down about 20 men at the outpost. Then “the earth began quaking, and a terror from God ensued.” In confusion, the Philistines turned on one another. Thus, Jonathan’s faith in God led to victory.—1 Sam. 13:5, 15, 22; 14:1, 2, 6, 14, 15, 20.

⁷ Even as Saul’s relationship with God deteriorated, Jonathan cooperated with his father whenever possible. For exam-

5. Why was it difficult for the people of Israel to be loyal to God while Saul was king?

6. What shows that Jonathan stayed loyal to Jehovah?

7. How did Jonathan treat his father?

One way to prove loyal to Jehovah is by showing respect for an unbelieving marriage mate
(See paragraph 9)



ple, they fought together in defense of God's people.—1 Sam. 31:1, 2.

⁸ Like Jonathan, we can prove ourselves loyal to Jehovah by being in relative subjection to the superior authorities, as God requires, even if some seem unworthy of respect. For example, a government official may be corrupt, but we still respect his position because we are in relative subjection to governmental “superior authorities.” (**Read Romans 13:1, 2.**) In fact, all of us can prove loyal to Jehovah by respecting those to whom he gives authority.—1 Cor. 11:3; Heb. 13:17.

⁹ In South America, Olga^[1] proved loyal to God by showing respect for her husband even under trying circumstances. For years, he expressed annoyance at her for being one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He abused her emotionally, insulted her, refused to speak to her, and threatened to take the children and leave her. But Olga did not return evil for evil. She

did her best to be a good wife by caring for her husband's meals, his clothes, and his family. (Rom. 12:17) When possible, she accompanied him to gatherings of his family or colleagues. For example, when he wanted to go to another city for the funeral of his father, she got the children ready and prepared everything needed for the trip. She waited for her husband at the church door until the ceremony ended. After many years, his attitude began to soften because of Olga's patience and respect. Now he takes her to the Kingdom Hall, even encourages her to go, and occasionally attends meetings with her.—1 Pet. 3:1.

WHEN THERE IS A CONFLICT OF LOYALTIES

¹⁰ Because Saul was determined to kill David, Jonathan faced a conflict of loyalties. Although he had made a covenant with David, Jonathan was also submissive to his father. But Jonathan knew

8, 9. How are we being loyal to God when we respect those who have authority?

10. How did Jonathan know to whom he should be loyal?

that God was with David and not with Saul. Therefore, Jonathan put loyalty to David ahead of loyalty to Saul. He warned David to hide and then spoke well of him to Saul.—**Read 1 Samuel 19: 1-6.**

¹¹ Loyalty to God helped an Australian sister named Alice to decide how much importance to give to other loyalties. When she began studying the Bible, she would tell her family about the good things she was learning. Later, Alice told members of her family that she would not be celebrating Christmas with them. She explained the reasons, but their mild concern gradually turned into bitter anger. They felt that she was turning her back on her family. Says Alice: “My mother finally said that she disowned me. I was shocked and deeply hurt because I really loved my family. Nevertheless, I resolved that Jehovah and his Son would be first in my heart, and I got baptized at the next assembly.”—Matt. 10:37.

¹² If we are not careful, loyalty to a nation, a school, or a sports team can eventually choke out loyalty to God. For example, Henry enjoys playing chess. His school had a tradition of winning the championship, and he wanted to put forth his best effort. But he admitted: “Gradually, loyalty to the school began to take priority over my loyalty to God. Weekend chess matches were crowding out my Kingdom service. So I decided to give up being part of the chess team.”—Matt. 6:33.

¹³ Dealing with conflicting family loy-

11, 12. How does our love for God help us decide to be loyal to him?

13. How can loyalty to God help us to cope with family problems?

alties can be challenging. For instance, Ken says: “I wanted to visit my elderly mother regularly and to have her stay with us occasionally. But my mother and my wife did not get along well. At first, I was faced with a dilemma because I could not please one without displeasing the other. Then I realized that in such a situation, my wife had first claim on my loyalty. So I worked out a tactful compromise acceptable to her.” Loyalty to God and respect for his Word gave Ken courage to explain to his wife why his mother should be received kindly and to explain to his mother why she needed to respect his wife.—**Read Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.**

WHEN WE ARE MISUNDERSTOOD OR MISJUDGED

¹⁴ Our loyalty to Jehovah may be challenged if someone in a responsible position misjudges us. Jonathan may have faced such a challenge. King Saul, the anointed of God, was aware of his son’s friendship with David, but he did not understand the reason for it. Saul humiliated Jonathan in an angry outburst. However, Jonathan did not retaliate. He did not waver in his loyalty to God or to David, who would in time become Israel’s king.—1 Sam. 20:30-41.

¹⁵ In congregations of Jehovah’s people today, it is very unlikely that we would be treated unjustly. However, those taking the lead among us are imperfect men and could misinterpret our actions. (1 Sam. 1:13-17) If we are ever misjudged or misunderstood, let us remain loyal to Jehovah.

14. How did Saul treat Jonathan unfairly?

15. If a brother treats us unfairly, how should we react?

Honoring our business agreements may test our loyalty to God and respect for the Bible
(See paragraph 16)



WHEN LOYALTY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS CLASH

¹⁶ Saul urged Jonathan to pursue his own interests. (1 Sam. 20:31) But loyalty to God moved Jonathan to befriend David rather than seek the advantages of the kingship for himself. We may be inclined to imitate Jonathan's unselfish spirit if we bear in mind that a person acceptable to Jehovah "does not go back on his promise, even when it is bad for him." (Ps. 15:4) Jonathan did not "go back on his promise" to David; neither should we go back on our promises. For example, if a business agreement becomes harder to honor than expected, our loyalty to God and regard for the Bible should move us to keep our word. And what if our marriage proves to be more challenging than anticipated? Love for God will surely move us to be loyal to our mate.—**Read Malachi 2:13-16.**

16. In what situations must we be loyal to God and not be selfish?

¹⁷ When we contemplate the example of Jonathan, do we not want to imitate his loyalty to God? Let us not pursue our own selfish interests. And like Jonathan, let us prove our loyalty to Jehovah by being loyal to his people, even those who may disappoint us. When we are loyal to Jehovah God in the face of challenging situations, we make his heart rejoice—and that gives us the deepest satisfaction possible. (Prov. 27:11) If we remain loyal to Jehovah, we will see how he eventually works everything out for the good of those who love him. In the next article, we will consider valuable lessons that can be learned by examining the activities of loyal and disloyal contemporaries of David.

17. How has this study helped you?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 9) Some names have been changed.



Learn From Jehovah's Loyal Servants

“What is Jehovah requiring of you? Only to exercise justice, to cherish loyalty, and to walk in modesty with your God!”—MIC. 6:8.

SONGS: 63, 43

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Who deserves our loyalty?

Why was Jonathan's reaction to David so different from Abner's?

What qualities will help us to be loyal to God, and how?

IN THE dead of night, David and Abishai silently make their way through 3,000 sleeping troops. At the center of the camp, the two men find King Saul fast asleep. He has journeyed to the Judean wilderness in order to find David and kill him. Abishai whispers: “Let me pin [Saul] to the ground with the spear just once, and I will not need to do it twice.” David's reply is astonishing! “Do not harm him, for who can lift his hand against the anointed of Jehovah and remain innocent? . . . It is unthinkable from Jehovah's standpoint for me to lift my hand against the anointed of Jehovah!”—1 Sam. 26: 8-12.

² David understood what loyalty to God involves. He had no intention of harming Saul. Why not? Because Saul was God's anointed king over Israel. Loyal servants of Jehovah respect those whom he appoints. Indeed, Jehovah requires

1, 2. How did David show that he was loyal to God? (See opening picture.)

that all of his people “cherish loyalty.”
—**Read Micah 6:8.**

³ Abishai showed respect for David. To illustrate: In an attempt to cover up his adultery with Bath-sheba, David had Abishai’s brother Joab arrange to have her husband, Uriah, killed in battle. (2 Sam. 11:2-4, 14, 15; 1 Chron. 2:16) Abishai may have known something about this, but he continued to respect David as the king appointed by God. Moreover, Abishai never tried to use his power as a military leader to seize Israel’s throne. Rather, he defended David against traitors and other enemies. —2 Sam. 10:10; 20:6; 21:15-17.

⁴ David’s refusal to harm King Saul showed that David was one of Jehovah’s loyal servants. As a youth, David was moved to face the Philistine giant Goliath, who brazenly dared to “taunt the battle line of the living God”! (1 Sam. 17:23, 26, 48-51) When David became king and committed gross sins involving adultery and murder, he accepted reproof from the prophet Nathan and repented. (2 Sam. 12:1-5, 13) In his old age, David continued to demonstrate loyalty to God. For example, he made generous contributions toward the construction of Jehovah’s temple. (1 Chron. 29:1-5) Yes, David made serious mistakes, but he was loyal to God. (Ps. 51:4, 10; 86:2) As we consider other accounts about David and his contemporaries, let us seek answers to these questions: What loyalties should take priority? Being loyal requires that we display what qualities?

3. How was Abishai loyal to David?

4. (a) How was David an example of loyalty to God? (b) What other examples will we consider?

WHICH LOYALTY SHOULD BE FIRST?

⁵ When Abishai crept into Saul’s camp, he did not have his loyalties in the proper order. Out of loyalty to David, Abishai was eager to kill King Saul, but David restrained him, realizing that it would be wrong to lift one’s hand “against the anointed of Jehovah.” (1 Sam. 26:8-11) From that incident, we learn an important lesson: Although we can properly have several loyalties in our heart, the correct order of their importance should be determined by our application of Bible principles.

⁶ Loyalty springs from the heart, but the human heart is treacherous. (Jer. 17:9) Thus, one who is loyal to God could easily feel strong ties of loyalty to a close friend or relative even if that person is practicing what is bad. Especially when someone close to us abandons the truth must we remember that Jehovah always merits our primary loyalty.

—**Read Matthew 22:37.**

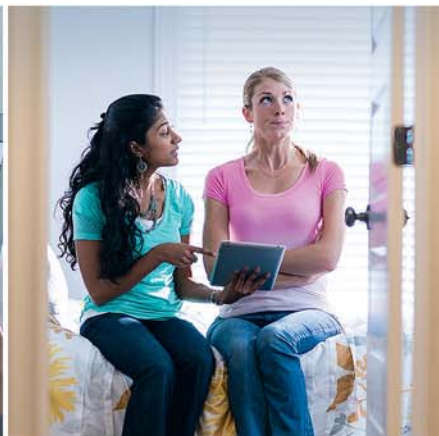
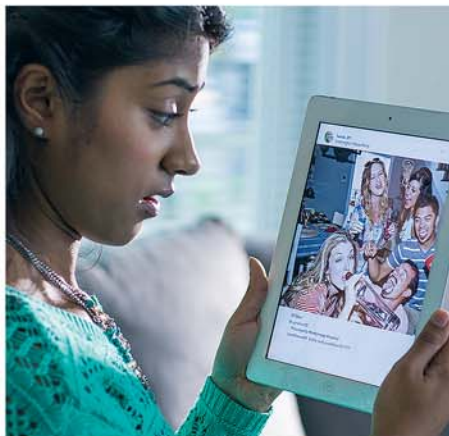
⁷ A conflict of loyalties may arise when a close relative is disfellowshipped. For example, a sister named Anne^[1] received a telephone call from her disfellowshipped mother. The mother wanted to visit Anne because she felt pained by her isolation from the family. Anne was deeply distressed by the plea and promised to reply by letter. Before writing, she reviewed Bible principles. (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 John 9-11) Anne wrote and kindly reminded her mother that *she* had cut *herself* off from the family by her

5. What lesson do we learn from Abishai’s mistake?

6. Although it is natural to be loyal to our family and friends, why must we be careful?

7. How did one sister stay loyal to God in a difficult situation?

If you become aware of a fellow believer's serious wrongdoing, will you loyally help your friend to get spiritual assistance?
(See paragraph 14)



wrongdoing and unrepentant attitude. “The only way you can relieve your pain is by returning to Jehovah,” Anne wrote.—Jas. 4:8.

⁸ The loyalty of David's contemporaries highlights three qualities that can help us to prove ourselves loyal to God. Those qualities are humility, kindness, and courage. Let us consider them one by one.

LOYALTY TO GOD REQUIRES HUMILITY

⁹ When David held Goliath's severed head in his hand and spoke with King Saul, at least two men must have been watching. One was Saul's son Jonathan, who made a covenant of friendship with David. The other was the army chief Abner. (1 Sam. 17:57-18:3) Abner later supported Saul's efforts to kill David. “Ruthless men seek my life,” wrote David. (Ps. 54:3; 1 Sam. 26:1-5) Why was Jonathan's reaction to David so different from Abner's? Like Jonathan, Abner

knew that God had chosen David to rule as king of Israel. After Saul's death, Abner could have shown humility and proved his loyalty to God by supporting David, not Saul's son Ish-bosheth. Later, when Abner had relations with King Saul's concubine, he may have been seeking the throne for himself.—2 Sam. 2:8-10; 3:6-11.

¹⁰ Lack of humility prevented David's son Absalom from being loyal to God. Why, “Absalom acquired for himself a chariot and horses and 50 men to run before him”? (2 Sam. 15:1) He also stole the people's loyalty. Like Abner, Absalom sought to kill David, even though he knew that Jehovah had appointed David as Israel's king.—2 Sam. 15:13, 14; 17:1-4.

¹¹ The examples of Abner and Absalom make it clear that inordinate ambition can easily cause a person to become disloyal to God. Surely, no faithful servant of Jehovah would pursue such a selfish and wicked course. However, a desire for wealth or a prestigious career in this

8. What qualities will help us to be loyal to God?

9. Why did Abner try to kill David?

10. Why was Absalom not loyal to God?

11. How can we benefit from Bible accounts about Abner, Absalom, and Baruch?



world can also have a spiritually detrimental effect on a Christian. In some undisclosed way, the prophet Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch, temporarily lost his focus. This was Jehovah's message to Baruch: "Look! What I have built up I am tearing down, and what I have planted I am uprooting—the entire land. But you are seeking great things for yourself. Stop seeking such things." (Jer. 45:4, 5) Baruch accepted the correction. And how wise it is to keep those words of God in mind as we await the end of this wicked world!

¹² Daniel, a brother in Mexico, needed to choose between being loyal to God and seeking his own selfish interests. He wanted to marry a girl who was not a believer. Says Daniel: "I continued writing to her even after I entered the pioneer service. But finally, I humbled myself and told an experienced elder that I was disturbed by a conflict of loyalties. He helped me to see that to be loyal to God, I needed to stop writing to her. After many prayers and tears, that is what I

12. Show why we cannot be loyal to God when we are selfish.

did. Soon my joy in the ministry increased." Daniel later married a fine Christian sister and now serves as a circuit overseer.

LOYALTY TO GOD HELPS US TO BE KIND

¹³ Loyalty to Jehovah can sometimes affect our loyalty to humans. The prophet Nathan remained loyal to David even while maintaining loyalty to God. Nathan learned that David had committed adultery and had arranged for the woman's husband to die in battle. When Jehovah sent Nathan to rebuke David, the prophet obeyed and acted courageously, even though he was loyal to David. Nathan presented the reproof with wisdom and kindness. To help David see the seriousness of his sins, Nathan used an illustration showing the injustice of a rich man who took a poor man's lamb. When David expressed outrage at what the rich man had done, Nathan told him: "You are the man!" David got the point! —2 Sam. 12:1-7, 13.

13. How did Nathan stay loyal to both God and David when David sinned?

¹⁴ Kindness can help you to deal with a conflict of loyalties. For example, you may have definite knowledge that a certain fellow believer is guilty of serious misconduct. You may feel loyal to him, especially if he is a close friend or a relative. But if you were to cover up the wrongdoing, you would be disloyal to God. Of course, your loyalty to Jehovah should come first. So like Nathan, be kind yet firm. Urge your friend or relative to seek the help of the elders. If he or she does not do so within a reasonable period of time, loyalty to God should move you to report the matter to the elders. In doing this, you are being loyal to Jehovah and kind to your friend or relative, for Christian elders will try to readjust such an individual with mildness.—**Read Leviticus 5:1; Galatians 6:1.**

LOYALTY TO GOD REQUIRES COURAGE

¹⁵ A man named Hushai needed courage to be loyal to God. Hushai was a loyal friend of King David. However, his loyalty was tested when David's son Absalom won the heart of many and sought to take Jerusalem and the throne. (2 Sam. 15:13; 16:15) David fled the city, but what would Hushai do? Would he switch his loyalty to Absalom, or would he follow the elderly king who was fleeing for his life? Resolved to be loyal to the king appointed by God, Hushai met David on the Mount of Olives.—2 Sam. 15:30, 32.

¹⁶ David asked Hushai to go back to Jerusalem, to pretend to be Absalom's friend, and to frustrate the advice of

Ahithophel. Risking his very life, Hushai proved loyal to Jehovah and did what David asked him to do. Just as David had prayed, the counsel of courageous Hushai did frustrate that of Ahithophel.—2 Sam. 15:31; 17:14.

¹⁷ We need courage to be loyal to Jehovah. Many of us have courageously stood firm against pressure from family members, workmates, or secular authorities in order to prove ourselves loyal to God. In Japan, for example, Taro had from childhood centered his life on being loyal and obedient to his parents. He did not do so merely out of obligation. He really wanted to make his parents happy. So when they opposed his association with Jehovah's Witnesses, he found it especially painful to tell them that he had decided to attend Christian meetings. Says Taro: "They were so angry that for years, I was forbidden to visit them at home. I prayed for courage to stick to my decision. Now their attitude has softened, and I can visit them regularly."—**Read Proverbs 29:25.**

¹⁸ Like David, Jonathan, Nathan, and Hushai, may we experience the deep satisfaction of proving ourselves loyal to Jehovah. On the other hand, let us learn a lesson from the disloyalty of Abner and Absalom. Surely we want to stick to Jehovah, as David did. As imperfect humans, we cannot avoid making mistakes. However, we can prove that loyalty to Jehovah has first place in our heart.

17. Why do we need courage to be loyal?

18. How have you benefited from this study?

14. How can you be loyal to both Jehovah and your friend or relative?

15, 16. Why did Hushai need courage to be loyal to God?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 7) Some names have been changed.



The Sound Car Known to Millions

“There is but one sound car in the Lord’s service in Brazil, and that one is known to millions of people, ‘the Watch Tower sound car.’”—Nathaniel A. Yuille, in 1938.



PROGRESS of the Kingdom work in Brazil was relatively slow in the early 1930’s. But in 1935, pioneers Nathaniel and Maud Yuille wrote to Joseph F. Rutherford, who was then taking the lead in the preaching work. They volunteered for service and wrote that they would be “glad to go anywhere.”

Nathaniel, a retired civil engineer, was then 62 years old. He had been the service director of a congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in San Francisco, California, U.S.A. There he had organized the preaching work and had used sound equip-

ment in spreading the good news. His experience and willing spirit proved to be a blessing in his new assignment as branch servant in a vast, multilingual territory—Brazil.

Nathaniel and Maud arrived in Brazil in 1936, along with fellow pioneer and interpreter Antonio P. Andrade. They brought with them precious cargo—35 phonographs and a sound car. The fifth largest country in the world in land area, Brazil then had only about 60 Kingdom publishers! Yet, these innovative sound tools would help them reach millions in just a few years.

One month after the Yuilles arrived, the branch office arranged Brazil’s first service convention, held in the city of São Paulo. Apparently with Maud as the driver, the sound car went into operation advertising the public lecture, which drew an attendance of 110! The convention program boosted the morale of the publishers, who



This sound car reached millions in Brazil with the good news

car reached people in parks, residential areas, and factories in the center of São Paulo and in nearby towns. The sound car provided a monthly program to 3,000 residents of a leper colony 60 miles (97 km) northwest of São Paulo. In time, a thriving congregation was formed. Despite their grievous affliction, those Kingdom publishers obtained permission to visit another leper colony with the Bible's comforting message.

Kingdom recordings in Portuguese finally arrived in late 1938. On All Souls' Day, the sound car went from cemetery to cemetery playing the records "Where Are the Dead?," "Jehovah," and "Riches," reaching over 40,000 mourners!

Indignant clergymen resented the bold public proclamation of Bible truth and often pressured local authorities to silence the sound car. Sister Yuille recalled one occasion when a local priest incited a mob to swarm around the sound car. But the mayor and police officials arrived and listened to the entire program. The mayor left with Bible literature in hand. There was no riot that day. Despite such opposition, the 1940 *Yearbook* report for Brazil pronounced the year 1939 "the best time of all to serve the Great Theocrat and proclaim his name."

The arrival of "the Watch Tower sound car" truly marked a turning point in the preaching work in Brazil. It played a key role in reaching millions with the Kingdom message. Though that famous car was sold in 1941, throngs of Jehovah's Witnesses have continued to declare the good news to honesthearted ones in the vast territory of Brazil.—*From our archives in Brazil.*

were moved to increase their share in field service. They learned how to preach using literature and testimony cards, as well as phonograph recordings in English, German, Hungarian, Polish, Spanish and, later, Portuguese.

Three service conventions, held in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Curitiba in 1937, provided fresh impetus to the evangelizing work. The sound car went along with conventioners in the house-to-house work. José Maglovsky, a young lad at the time, later wrote: "We would place our Bible publications on a stand, and as the sound car broadcast a recorded message, we would talk to the people who came out of their homes to see what was happening."

Baptisms took place in rivers, while bathers basked in the sun nearby. What an opportunity to preach the good news with the help of the sound car! With Brother Rutherford's baptism talk booming from the amplifiers, curious people surrounded the car, listening as the talk was interpreted into Portuguese. Afterward, baptism candidates were immersed to the sound of Kingdom songs recorded in Polish. Brothers and sisters sang along in different languages. "It reminded one of how at Pentecost each one understood in his own language," reported the 1938 *Yearbook*.

Following the conventions, every Sunday, rain or shine, recorded Bible lectures from the sound



Free downloads of this magazine and other publications are available



You can also read the *New World Translation* online

Visit www.jw.org, or scan code



w1602-E
151009