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# THE WATCHTOWER

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**SONG 42**

The Prayer of  
God's Servant

**PREVIEW**

In his Word, Jehovah assures us that he is willing to forgive repentant sinners. Yet, we may at times feel unworthy of his forgiveness. In this article, we will discuss why we can be certain that our God is always ready to pardon us when we are truly sorry for the sins we have committed.

## Jehovah—The Greatest Forgiver

*“You, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive; you abound in loyal love for all those who call on you.”—PS. 86:5.*

KING Solomon observed: “There is no righteous man on earth who always does good and never sins.” (Eccl. 7:20) How true! We are all sinners. (1 John 1:8) So we all need forgiveness from God and from fellow humans.

<sup>2</sup> No doubt you remember a time when you offended a close friend. You wanted to correct the matter and repair your relationship, so you offered a heartfelt apology. How did you feel when your friend freely forgave you? Relieved? Yes, and happy too!

<sup>3</sup> We want Jehovah to be our closest Friend, but at one time or another, we will say or do things that offend him. Why can we be certain, though, that Jehovah is eager to forgive? In what way is Jehovah's forgiveness unique in comparison with the forgiveness that we can extend? And finally, who can gain God's forgiveness?

### JEHOVAH IS READY TO FORGIVE

<sup>4</sup> God's Word assures us that Jehovah is ready to forgive. When Jehovah revealed himself to Moses at Mount Sinai, He said through an angelic spokesman:

1. As recorded at Ecclesiastes 7:20, what truth did King Solomon express?
2. How does it feel to be forgiven by a close friend?
3. What will we focus on in this article?
4. Why can we be certain that Jehovah is ready to forgive?

**“He well knows  
how we are  
formed.”**

—Ps. 103:13, 14

**Jehovah is aware of all  
that has shaped us**

(See paragraph 5)



“Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and abundant in loyal love and truth, showing loyal love to thousands, ***pardonning error and transgression and sin.***” (Ex. 34:6, 7) Jehovah is a warm and merciful God who is always ready to forgive repentant sinners.—Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15.

<sup>5</sup> As our Creator, Jehovah knows everything about us. Just think! He knows every detail about every person on this earth. (Ps. 139:15-17) So he can see all the imperfections that we inherited from our parents. Even more, he is aware of all the experiences that have molded and shaped our personality. What does this intimate knowledge of humankind move Jehovah to do? It moves him to act mercifully toward us.—Ps. 78:39; **read Psalm 103:13, 14.**

<sup>6</sup> Jehovah has proved that he is eager

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5. According to Psalm 103:13, 14, what does Jehovah's intimate knowledge of people move him to do?

6. How has Jehovah proved that he is eager to forgive?

to forgive. He understands that because of the actions of the first man, Adam, we all came under the curse of sin and death. (Rom. 5:12) There was no way for us to free ourselves or any other person from that curse. (Ps. 49:7-9) However, our loving God showed compassion and arranged for us to be set free. What did he do? As John 3:16 reveals, Jehovah sent his only-begotten Son to die in our behalf. (Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:19) Jesus took our place—suffering the penalty of death—to set free any who exercise faith in him. (Heb. 2:9) How painful it must have been for Jehovah to see his beloved Son die an agonizing and humiliating death! Surely, Jehovah would not have allowed his Son to die if He did not want to forgive us.

<sup>7</sup> The Bible is filled with examples of individuals whom Jehovah freely forgave. (Eph. 4:32) Who comes to your mind? Perhaps you think of King Manasseh. That wicked man sinned against

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7. What are some Bible examples of individuals whom Jehovah freely forgave?



Jehovah in terrible ways. He took the lead in false worship. He killed his own children, offering them as sacrifices to pagan gods. He even went so far as to place a carved image of a false god in Jehovah's sacred temple. Of him, the Bible says: "He did on a grand scale what was bad in Jehovah's eyes, to offend him." (2 Chron. 33:2-7) Yet, when Manasseh showed heartfelt repentance, Jehovah freely forgave him. God even restored him to his position as king. (2 Chron. 33:12, 13) Perhaps you also think of King David, who committed serious sins against Jehovah, including adultery and murder. Yet, when David sincerely repented and acknowledged his error, Jehovah forgave him as well. (2 Sam. 12:9, 10, 13, 14) Yes, we can be certain that Jehovah is eager to forgive. And, as we will see, his ability to forgive is unique when it is compared with that of humans.

#### JEHOVAH'S UNIQUE ABILITY TO FORGIVE

<sup>8</sup> Jehovah is "the Judge of all the earth." (Gen. 18:25) A good judge needs to have a deep understanding of the law. That certainly is true of Jehovah because in addition to being our Judge, he is also our Lawgiver. (Isa. 33:22) No one besides Jehovah has such a deep and strong sense of right and wrong. What else does a good judge need? He needs to be able to consider all the relevant facts in a case before he renders judgment. In this respect, Jehovah is uniquely qualified as Judge.

8. How does Jehovah's unique position as Judge affect his ability to forgive?

<sup>9</sup> Unlike human judges, Jehovah always has a perfect grasp of all the facts of any case that comes before him. (Gen. 18:20, 21; Ps. 90:8) He is not limited by what humans see or hear. He completely understands how a person's actions are influenced by his genetic makeup, upbringing, and environment as well as by his emotional and mental condition. Jehovah also reads the heart. He fully perceives the motivations, intentions, and desires of each person. Nothing can be hidden from Jehovah. (Heb. 4:13) Thus, Jehovah's forgiveness is always based on his complete knowledge of a situation.

<sup>10</sup> Jehovah's judgments are always just and fair. He is completely impartial. His forgiveness is never determined by someone's appearance, wealth, prominence, or abilities. (1 Sam. 16:7; Jas. 2:1-4) No one can pressure or bribe Jehovah. (2 Chron. 19:7) His decisions are never colored by frustration or sentiment. (Ex. 34:7) Without a doubt, Jehovah's understanding and his penetrating insight make him the most qualified Judge.—**Read Deuteronomy 32:4.**

<sup>11</sup> The writers of the Hebrew Scriptures recognized that Jehovah's forgiveness is unique. In some cases, they used a Hebrew word that one reference work says "is reserved especially to mark the pardon extended to the sinner by God, and is never used to denote that inferior

9. What information does Jehovah have available when deciding whether to forgive?

10. Why can we say that Jehovah's judgments are always just and fair? (Deuteronomy 32:4)

11. What is unique about Jehovah's forgiveness?



“The Rock,  
perfect is  
his activity.”

—Deut. 32:4

Jehovah is just,  
fair, and impartial.  
He cannot be bribed

(See paragraph 10)

kind and measure of forgiveness which is exercised by one man towards another.” Only Jehovah has the power to pardon a repentant sinner completely. What results when Jehovah forgives us?

<sup>12</sup> When we accept the fact that Jehovah has forgiven us, we enjoy “seasons of refreshing,” including peace of mind and a clean conscience. Such forgiveness cannot come from men but must come from “Jehovah himself.” (Acts 3: 19) When Jehovah forgives us, he restores his relationship with us so completely that it is as though we had never sinned.

<sup>13</sup> Once Jehovah forgives us, he will never accuse us or punish us again for that sin. (Isa. 43:25; Jer. 31:34) Jehovah puts our sins “as far off as the sunrise is from the sunset.”\* (Ps. 103:12) When we reflect on how great Jehovah’s

forgiveness is, we are filled with gratitude and awe. (Ps. 130:4) But who can experience this forgiveness from Jehovah?

#### WHOM WILL JEHOVAH FORGIVE?

<sup>14</sup> As we have seen, Jehovah’s decision to forgive is not based on whether the sin was great or small. Also, we have learned that Jehovah uses his knowledge as our Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge when deciding whether he will extend forgiveness. What factors does Jehovah consider?

<sup>15</sup> One factor that Jehovah considers is whether the sinner knew that what he was doing was wrong. Jesus made this clear, as recorded at **Luke 12:47, 48. (Read.)** A person who willfully schemes to do something wicked and knows full well that he is doing something that is offensive to Jehovah sins in a serious

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\* See the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*, chap. 26, par. 9.

12-13. (a) What does a person enjoy when he is pardoned by Jehovah? (b) How long do the benefits of Jehovah’s forgiveness last?

14. What have we learned so far about Jehovah’s decision to forgive?

15. According to Luke 12:47, 48, what is one factor that Jehovah considers?

**“He will forgive  
in a large way.”**

—Isa. 55:7

**We can trust that Jehovah  
will forgive us when we  
sincerely repent**

(See paragraphs 16-17)



way. Such a person is in danger of not being forgiven. (Mark 3:29; John 9:41) We must admit, however, that sometimes we are aware that what we did was wrong. Is there any hope for us in that case? Yes! And this brings us to another factor that Jehovah considers.

<sup>16</sup> Another factor that Jehovah considers is whether the sinner is sincerely repentant. What does it mean to repent? To repent means “to change one’s mind, attitude, or purpose.” It includes the idea that a person feels regret and deep sadness about the bad things he has done or about not doing the right things he should have done. A repentant person is grieved not only by the wrongs he has committed but also by the poor spiritual condition that led to those wrongs. Recall that Kings Manasseh and David both committed serious sins; yet, Jehovah forgave them because they were sincerely repentant. (1 Ki. 14:8) Yes, Jehovah must see evidence of repentance in

order to forgive. But it is not enough for us to feel sorry about a sinful course or a sin that we have committed. We must be ready to take action.\* That brings us to another factor that Jehovah considers.

<sup>17</sup> Conversion is another important factor that Jehovah considers. Conversion means “a turning around.” In other words, a person must change course by leaving his bad way and pursuing the way of Jehovah. **(Read Isaiah 55:7.)** The individual must transform his mind so that he is guided by the thinking of Jehovah. (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) He must be determined to leave behind his former bad ways of thinking and acting. (Col. 3:7-10) Of course, it is our faith in the sacrifice of Christ that provides the real basis for Jehovah to forgive us and cleanse us

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\* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** “**Repentance**” refers to a change of mind accompanied by heartfelt regret over a former way of life, wrong actions, or what one has failed to do. Genuine repentance produces fruitage, a changed course of action.

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16. What is repentance, and why is it essential if we are to be forgiven by Jehovah?

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17. What is conversion, and why is it vital if we are to avoid repeating past sins? (Isaiah 55:7)

from sin. Jehovah will extend the value of that sacrifice to us when he sees that we are making a sincere effort to change our course of conduct.—1 John 1:7.

### HAVE CONFIDENCE IN JEHOVAH'S FORGIVENESS

<sup>18</sup> Let us briefly review some of the key points we have discussed. Jehovah is truly the greatest Forgiver in the universe. On what basis can we say that? First, he is always ready to forgive. Second, he knows us through and through. He is perfectly familiar with our makeup, and he is in the ideal position to determine whether we are truly repentant. And third, when Jehovah forgives us, he wipes the slate clean, so to speak. This allows us to have a clean conscience and enjoy his favor.

<sup>19</sup> Of course, as long as we are im-

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18. What have we considered about Jehovah's forgiveness?

19. Although we are imperfect and will continue to sin, why can we be joyful?

perfect, we will continue to sin. However, we can gain comfort from the words found in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 771: "Since Jehovah mercifully considers the fleshly weakness of his servants, they need not be in a constant state of remorse due to their errors resulting from inherent imperfection. (Ps 103:8-14; 130:3) If they are conscientiously walking in God's ways, they may be joyful. (Php 4:4-6; 1Jo 3:19-22)." What an encouraging thought!

<sup>20</sup> We are grateful that Jehovah is ready to pardon us when we are truly sorry for the sins we have committed. How, though, can we imitate Jehovah's forgiveness? In what ways is our forgiveness similar to Jehovah's forgiveness, but in what ways is it different? Why is understanding that distinction important? The next article will answer those questions.

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20. What will we consider in the next article?

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### WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT JEHOVAH'S FORGIVENESS FROM . . .

■ Psalm 103:13, 14?

■ Deuteronomy 32:4?

■ Isaiah 55:7?

**SONG 130**

Be Forgiving

**PREVIEW**

Jehovah is eager to forgive repentant sinners. As Christians, we want to imitate his example when someone offends us. In this article, we will consider sins that we can personally forgive and sins that we must bring to the attention of the elders. We will also consider why Jehovah wants us to forgive one another and what blessings we will receive when we do so.

## Jehovah Blesses Those Who Forgive

*“Just as Jehovah freely forgave you, you must also do the same.”—COL. 3:13.*

ALTHOUGH Jehovah is our Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge, he is also our loving heavenly Father. (Ps. 100:3; Isa. 33:22) When we sin against him and are sincerely repentant, he is not only able but also eager to forgive us. (Ps. 86:5) Through the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah gave this warm assurance: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be made as white as snow.”—Isa. 1:18.

<sup>2</sup> Because we are imperfect, we all say and do things that offend others. (Jas. 3:2) That does not mean, however, that we cannot enjoy close relationships with them. We can if we learn to be forgiving. (Prov. 17:9; 19:11; Matt. 18:21, 22) When we hurt one another in small ways, Jehovah wants us to forgive. (Col. 3:13) We have good reason to do so. After all, Jehovah freely forgives us “in a large way.”—Isa. 55:7.

<sup>3</sup> In this article, we will consider how imperfect humans can imitate Jehovah’s forgiveness. Which sins must we bring to the attention of the elders? Why does Jehovah encourage us to forgive others? And what can we learn from some of our fellow believers who have suf-

1. What assurance does Jehovah give to repentant sinners?
2. If we are to enjoy peace with others, what must we do?
3. What will we consider in this article?



ferred greatly because of the sins of others?

#### WHEN A CHRISTIAN COMMITS A SERIOUS SIN

<sup>4</sup> Serious sins must be brought to the attention of the elders. Examples of such sins are found at 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. Serious sins are gross violations of God's law. If a Christian commits such a sin, he must approach Jehovah God in prayer, and he must go to the elders of the congregation. (Ps. 32:5; Jas. 5:14) What role do the elders play? Only Jehovah has the authority to forgive sins fully, which he makes possible on the basis of the ransom sacrifice.\* Jehovah, however, has entrusted the elders with the responsibility of determining from the Scriptures whether the sinner can remain in the congregation. (1 Cor. 5:12) Among other things, they will endeavor to answer the following questions: Was the sin intentional? Did the person scheme to do what was wrong? Did he practice the sin over an extended period of time? Most important, is there evidence that he is sincerely repentant? Are there indications that Jehovah has forgiven him?—Acts 3:19.

<sup>5</sup> When the elders meet with the wrongdoer, their goal is to reach the same decision on earth that has already been reached in heaven. (Matt. 18:

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\* See *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1996, "Questions From Readers."

4. (a) When a servant of Jehovah commits a serious sin, what must he do? (b) What is the role of the elders when they meet with a wrongdoer?

5. What blessings come from the work of the elders?

18) How does this arrangement benefit the congregation? It ensures that unrepentant wrongdoers who might harm Jehovah's precious sheep are removed. (1 Cor. 5:6, 7, 11-13; Titus 3:10, 11) It may also help a sinner to repent and benefit from Jehovah's forgiveness. (Luke 5:32) The elders pray in behalf of a repentant one and ask Jehovah to help him recover spiritually.—Jas. 5:15.

<sup>6</sup> Suppose that a person is not repentant when the elders meet with him. In that case, he will be disfellowshipped from the congregation. If he has violated the law of the land, the elders will not shield him from the consequences. Jehovah allows governmental authorities to judge and punish *anyone* who violates the law—whether he is repentant or not. (Rom. 13:4) Yet, if the person later comes to his senses and sincerely repents and turns around, Jehovah is willing to pardon him. (Luke 15:17-24) That is true even if his sins were very serious.—2 Chron. 33:9, 12, 13; 1 Tim. 1:15.

<sup>7</sup> What a relief it is to know that we do not need to decide if Jehovah will pardon a sinner! Still, there is something that we do need to decide. What is it? In some cases, an individual has sinned against us—even seriously—but then he may apologize and ask for our forgiveness. In other cases, the person may not. Even so, we can choose to forgive the person in the sense that we can decide

6. If a person is disfellowshipped, is forgiveness still possible? Explain.

7. In what sense can we forgive someone who has sinned against us?

to let go of any resentment and anger that we feel toward him. Realistically, this may take time and effort, especially if we have been deeply hurt. *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1994, says: “When you do forgive a sinner, this does not mean that you are condoning the sin. For the Christian, forgiveness means trustfully leaving the matter in Jehovah’s hands. He is the righteous Judge of all the universe, and he will carry out justice at the right time.” Why does Jehovah encourage us to forgive and to leave justice where it belongs—in *his* hands?

#### WHY JEHOVAH ENCOURAGES US TO FORGIVE

<sup>8</sup> ***Being forgiving shows appreciation.*** In one parable, Jesus compared Jehovah to a master who canceled an enormous debt that one of his slaves could not repay. Yet, the forgiven slave failed to act mercifully toward a slave who owed him a much smaller amount of money. (Matt. 18:23-35) What was Jesus teaching us? If we truly appreciate Jehovah’s great mercy toward us, we will be moved to forgive others. (Ps. 103:9) *The Watchtower* expressed it this way years ago: “No matter how many times we forgive our fellow creatures, it could never equal the extent of God’s forgiveness and mercy to us through Christ.”

<sup>9</sup> ***Forgivers will be forgiven.*** Jehovah shows mercy to those who are merciful.

(Matt. 5:7; Jas. 2:13) Jesus made that clear when he taught his disciples how to pray. **(Read Matthew 6:14, 15.)** Earlier, Jehovah made the same point in connection with his servant Job. That faithful man had been deeply hurt by the cutting remarks of three men named Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Jehovah instructed Job to pray in their behalf. After Job did so, Jehovah blessed him. —Job 42:8-10.

<sup>10</sup> ***Harboring resentment is damaging.*** Jehovah wants us to enjoy the relief that comes from unburdening ourselves of resentment. **(Read Ephesians 4:31, 32.)** He urges us to “let go of anger and abandon rage.” (Ps. 37:8) There is wisdom in following that advice. Harboring resentment can be harmful to our physical and mental health. (Prov. 14:30) Our harboring such resentment will not affect the offender any more than our drinking poison would harm the one who offended us. Rather, when we forgive others, we are giving ourselves a gift. (Prov. 11:17) We find peace of mind and heart, and we are able to move ahead in our service to Jehovah.

<sup>11</sup> ***Vengeance belongs to Jehovah.*** Jehovah has not authorized us to seek revenge when someone sins against us. **(Read Romans 12:19-21.)** With our limited and imperfect viewpoint, we are simply not in a position to judge matters correctly, as God can. (Heb. 4:13) And, at times, we allow our emotions to interfere with our good judgment. Jehovah

8. How does being forgiving show appreciation for Jehovah’s mercy?

9. To whom does Jehovah show mercy? (Matthew 6:14, 15)

10. Why is harboring resentment damaging? (Ephesians 4:31, 32)

11. What does the Bible say about seeking revenge? (Romans 12:19-21)



**“The former things  
will not be called  
to mind.”**

—Isa. 65:17

**Let go of anger and resentment.  
Leave matters in God’s hands.  
He will undo all the harm caused by sin**  
(See paragraph 12)

inspired James to write: “Man’s anger does not bring about God’s righteousness.” (Jas. 1:20) We can be certain that Jehovah will do the right thing and make sure that perfect justice will be carried out.

<sup>12</sup> ***Forgiveness shows our confidence in Jehovah’s justice.*** By leaving matters in Jehovah’s hands, we show that we are confident that Jehovah will undo all the harm that has been caused by sin. In his promised new world, painful emotional wounds “will not be called to mind, nor will they come up into the heart” ever again. (Isa. 65:17) But when we have been deeply hurt, is it really possible to let go of the anger and resentment we might have in our heart? Consider how some have been able to do so.

#### **BLESSINGS OF FORGIVENESS**

<sup>13</sup> Many of our Christian brothers and

12. How can we show confidence in Jehovah’s justice?

13-14. What did you learn about forgiveness from the experience of Tony and José?

sisters decided to forgive even when they were deeply hurt by the actions of others. What blessings have they experienced from doing so?

<sup>14</sup> Long before he learned the truth, Tony,\* who lives in the Philippines, found out that one of his older brothers had been murdered by a man named José. At the time, Tony was a very aggressive and violent person, and he wanted revenge. José was arrested and imprisoned for his crime. Later, when José was released from prison, Tony vowed that he would hunt him down and kill him. He purchased a gun for that purpose. Meanwhile, Tony began to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. He says, “As I was studying, I learned that I needed to change my ways, and that included letting go of my anger.” In time, Tony got baptized and was eventually appointed as a congregation elder. Imagine his surprise when he learned that José had also become a baptized

\* Some names have been changed.



**The example of Peter and Sue shows that we can put anger and resentment behind us**  
(See paragraphs 15-16)

servant of Jehovah! When the two met, they warmly embraced each other, and Tony told José that he had forgiven him. Tony says that this act of forgiveness brought him such great joy that it was difficult for him even to describe that wonderful feeling. Yes, Jehovah blessed Tony's willingness to forgive.

<sup>15</sup> In 1985, Peter and Sue were attending a meeting at the Kingdom Hall when suddenly there was a massive explosion. A man had planted a bomb inside the Kingdom Hall! Sue suffered serious injuries that permanently damaged her sight and hearing. She also lost her sense of smell.\* Peter and Sue often asked themselves, 'What kind of person would do such an evil thing?' Many years later, the perpetrator, who was not a servant of

Jehovah, was arrested and sentenced to life in prison. When asked if they had forgiven this man, Peter and Sue said: "Jehovah teaches us that harboring anger and resentment can harm us physically, emotionally, and mentally. So very early on, we asked Jehovah to help us put aside anger and resentment and get on with our life."

<sup>16</sup> Has it been easy for them to extend forgiveness? Not always. They continue: "Every now and then when the effects of Sue's injuries impact our life, anger wells up. But we do not dwell on the matter, so these feelings quickly fade. In fact, we can say from our heart that if the bomber becomes our brother one day, we will welcome him. This experience has taught us that Bible principles are really liberating; they set us free in more ways than we can imagine! We also take comfort in knowing that Jehovah will soon undo all the damage."

\* See *Awake!* January 8, 1992, pp. 9-13. See also the video on JW Broadcasting® entitled *Peter and Sue Schulz: A Trauma Can Be Overcome*.

15-16. What did you learn about forgiveness from the experience of Peter and Sue?



<sup>17</sup> Myra learned the truth when she was already married and had two small children. Her husband did not accept the truth. In time, he committed adultery and abandoned the family. Myra says: “When my husband left me and our two children, I felt the emotions that many do after being betrayed by a loved one—shock, disbelief, grief, regret, self-blame, and anger.” Although the marriage ended, the pain of betrayal remained. Myra continues: “Those feelings kept me in turmoil for months, and I realized that they were affecting my relationship with Jehovah and with others.” Myra now says that she has let go of her anger and does not harbor any ill will toward her former husband. She hopes that one day he will draw close to Jehovah. Myra is able to focus on the future. As a single mother, she raised her two children to be servants of Jehovah. Today Myra has the joy of serving Jehovah along with her children and their families.

17. What did you learn about forgiveness from the experience of Myra?

## JEHOVAH’S PERFECT JUSTICE

<sup>18</sup> What a relief it is to know that we do not have the burden of deciding how individuals should be judged! As the Supreme Judge, Jehovah will care for this important work. (Rom. 14:10-12) We can have complete confidence that he will always judge in harmony with his perfect standards of right and wrong. (Gen. 18:25; 1 Ki. 8:32) He will never do anything unrighteous!

<sup>19</sup> We long for the time when Jehovah will completely undo all the bad effects of human imperfection and sin. At that time, all our physical and emotional wounds will be permanently healed. (Ps. 72:12-14; Rev. 21:3, 4) They will never come to mind again. While we wait for that wonderful time to arrive, how thankful we are that Jehovah has empowered us with the ability to imitate him by being forgiving.

18. What confidence can we have in Jehovah as the Supreme Judge?

19. What will Jehovah’s perfect justice accomplish?

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## WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT FORGIVENESS FROM . . .

■ Matthew 6:14, 15?

■ Ephesians 4:31, 32?

■ Romans 12:19-21?

## SONG 105

“God Is Love”

## PREVIEW

Fear is a normal emotion that can protect us from danger. But giving in to unwholesome fear can do the opposite; it can put us in harm’s way. How so? Satan will use that fear against us. Clearly, we must work hard to control that kind of fear. What will help us? As this article will show, when we are convinced that Jehovah is on our side and that he loves us, we can overcome any fear.

## How Love Helps Us to Overcome Fear

*“Jehovah is on my side; I will not be afraid.”—PS. 118:6.*

CONSIDER the following real-life situations. Nestor and his wife, María, wanted to serve where the need was greater.\* In order to accomplish that, however, they would need to adjust their standard of living. But they were afraid that they might not be truly happy if they had to live on less money. When Biniam became one of Jehovah’s Witnesses in a country where our work is opposed, he realized that as one of God’s people, he could be persecuted. That scared him. But he was even more fearful of how his family might react when they found out about his new religion. Valérie was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer, and she struggled to find a surgeon who would respect her Bible-based beliefs regarding blood. Understandably, she feared that she might die.

<sup>2</sup> Have you experienced such fears? Many of us have. If we do not learn to control our fears, we will likely make bad decisions that could even have a negative impact on our relationship with Jehovah. That is what Satan wants. He also tries to use our fears to make us disobey Jehovah’s laws, including the command to preach the good news. (Rev. 12:17) Satan is wicked, relentless, and powerful. But you can protect yourself from him. How?

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\* Some names have been changed.

1. What are some common fears?
2. Why do we need to work at overcoming our fears?

<sup>3</sup> When we are convinced that Jehovah loves us—that he is on our side—we can defeat Satan’s efforts. (Ps. 118:6) For example, the writer of Psalm 118 faced some very distressing situations. He had many enemies, including some in high places (verses 9, 10). At times, he was under great pressure (verse 13). And he had received strong discipline from Jehovah (verse 18). Still, that psalmist was moved to sing: “I will not be afraid.” What made him feel so safe and secure? He knew that although Jehovah had disciplined him, his heavenly Father loved him very much. The psalmist was convinced that no matter what situation he faced, his loving God would always be ready to help him.—Ps. 118:29.

<sup>4</sup> We need to be convinced that Jehovah loves us personally. Our having that conviction will help us to overcome three common fears, namely, (1) fear of not being able to provide for our family, (2) fear of man, and (3) fear of death. The individuals mentioned in the opening paragraph were able to overcome their fears because they were convinced of God’s love.

#### FEAR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR OUR FAMILY

<sup>5</sup> A Christian family head takes seriously the responsibility to care materially for his family. (1 Tim. 5:8) If you are a family head, perhaps during the recent pandemic there was a real possibil-

ity that you would lose your job. You may have worried that you would struggle to put food on the table and pay the rent or the mortgage on your home. You may also have been afraid that if you lost your job, you would not be able to find another one. Or like Nestor and María, mentioned earlier, you may have hesitated to make an adjustment in your secular work that would affect your lifestyle. Satan has had a lot of success in exploiting such fears.

<sup>6</sup> Satan tries to make us believe that Jehovah does not care about us personally and that we are on our own when it comes to providing for our family. As a result, we might conclude that we need to do whatever it takes to hold on to our present employment, even if it means ignoring Scriptural principles.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus, who knows the Father better than anyone else does, assures us that our God “knows what [we] need even before [we] ask him.” (Matt. 6:8) And Jesus knows that Jehovah is ready to provide for our needs. As Christians, we are members of God’s household. We can be sure that as family Head, Jehovah will respect the principle he had recorded at 1 Timothy 5:8.

<sup>8</sup> When we are convinced that Jehovah loves us and that he loves our family, we have no trouble believing that we will have the things we need. (**Read Matthew 6:31-33.**) Jehovah wants to

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3. What will help us to overcome our fears?
  4. What fears can we overcome if we trust that God loves us?
  5. What circumstances might cause great concern to a family head? (See cover picture.)

- 
6. What does Satan try to make us believe?
  7. Of what does Jesus assure us?
  8. (a) What will help us to overcome the fear that we will not be able to provide for our family? (Matthew 6:31-33) (b) How might we imitate the couple in the picture who are sharing a meal with a sister?



Jehovah will see to it that we have what we need. He may use our brothers to help us  
(See paragraph 8)

provide for us, and what a loving, generous Provider he is! When he created the earth, he did more than just give us the basic things we would need to survive. He lovingly filled the earth with things that would give us immense pleasure. (Gen. 2:9) Even if at times we have just enough to get by, we do well to focus on the fact that we **are** getting by. Jehovah has not failed to provide for us. (Matt. 6:11) We need to keep in mind that any material sacrifice we make now is nothing in comparison to what our loving God will give us, both now and in the future. That is what Nestor and María came to realize.—Isa. 65:21, 22.

<sup>9</sup> Nestor and María had enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle in Colombia. “We thought about simplifying our life and expanding our ministry,” they said, “but we were afraid that we wouldn’t be happy living on less money.” What helped them to overcome their fear? They reflected on the many ways that Jehovah had proved his love for them. Convinced

that he would always take care of them, they quit their well-paying jobs. They sold their home and moved to a part of the country where there was a greater need for Kingdom preachers. How do they feel about their decision? Nestor says: “We have seen the truthfulness of Matthew 6:33. We have never lacked anything materially. And we live a happier life now.”

### FEAR OF MAN

<sup>10</sup> Humans have a bad record of harming one another. (Eccl. 8:9) For example, people abuse their authority, criminals commit violent acts, bullies at school insult and threaten their classmates, and some people even treat their family members brutally. No wonder humans fear other humans! How does Satan try to take advantage of our fear of man?

<sup>11</sup> Satan uses fear of man to try to force us to make compromises and

9. What can you learn from Nestor and María’s example?

10. Why is it understandable that humans fear one another?

11-12. How does Satan use fear of man against us?



to stop us from preaching. Under the influence of Satan, governments have banned our work and persecuted us. (Luke 21:12; Rev. 2:10) Various elements of Satan's world spread misleading information and vicious lies about Jehovah's Witnesses. People who believe these lies may mock us or even attack us physically. (Matt. 10:36) Are we surprised at Satan's tactics? Not at all. He was already using them in the first century.—Acts 5: 27, 28, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Fear of opposition from governments is not the only weapon Satan uses. For some, fear of how family members will react to the truth is greater than any physical abuse. They love their relatives very much and want them to come to know and love Jehovah. It pains them to hear their relatives speak disrespectfully of the true God and of his worshippers. In some cases, however, relatives who were initially opposed later came into the truth. But suppose our family members cut all ties with us because of our new beliefs? How will we react?

<sup>13</sup> We can take comfort from the beautiful truth reflected at **Psalm 27:10. (Read.)** When we remember just how much Jehovah loves us, we feel secure in the face of opposition. And we are confident that he will reward us for our endurance. Jehovah will care for our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs far better than anyone else can! That is what Biniam, mentioned earlier, discovered.

<sup>14</sup> Biniam became one of Jehovah's Witnesses despite knowing that he could face vicious persecution. Consider how his knowing that Jehovah loves him helped Biniam to overcome fear of man. "The persecution was beyond imagination," he says. "But what I feared even more than government persecution was opposition from my family. I was afraid that my decision to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses would disappoint my unbelieving father and that my family

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13. How can our being convinced of God's love help us to deal with rejection by family members? (Psalm 27:10)

14. What can you learn from Biniam's example?

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Even if family members oppose us, we can be confident of Jehovah's love  
(See paragraphs 12-14)



would think that I was a failure.” However, Biniam was convinced that Jehovah always cares for those whom He loves. Biniam explains: “I reflected on how Jehovah had helped others to endure economic hardship, prejudice, and mob violence. I knew that if I stuck with Jehovah, he would bless me. When I was arrested multiple times and even tortured, I experienced firsthand just how much Jehovah helps us in our time of need if we remain faithful.” Jehovah became a real Father to Biniam, and His people proved to be a real family to him.

### FEAR OF DEATH

<sup>15</sup> The Bible acknowledges that death is an enemy. (1 Cor. 15:25, 26) We may feel anxious at the thought of death, especially when we or our loved ones are critically ill. Why do we fear death? Because Jehovah created us with the desire to enjoy life forever. (Eccl. 3:11) A balanced fear of death can help us to protect our life. For example, it can motivate us to make good decisions about our diet and exercise routine, to seek the help of physicians and medications when necessary, and to avoid needlessly putting our life in danger.

<sup>16</sup> Satan knows that we cherish our life. He claims, however, that we would sacrifice everything we have—even our friendship with Jehovah—just to preserve our present life. (Job 2:4, 5) How wrong Satan is! Still, since he is “the one having the means to cause death,” Satan tries to exploit our natural fear of death

in order to make us abandon Jehovah. (Heb. 2:14, 15) In some cases, Satan’s agents threaten to kill Jehovah’s worshippers if they do not renounce their faith. In other cases, Satan may take advantage of a life-threatening medical situation to try to get us to compromise. Medical doctors or unbelieving family members may pressure us to accept a blood transfusion, which would violate God’s law. Or someone may try to persuade us to consider another therapy that goes against Scriptural principles.

<sup>17</sup> Although we do not want to die, we know that Jehovah will not stop loving us if our life should end. (**Read Romans 8:37-39.**) When Jehovah’s friends die, he keeps them in his memory, as if they were still alive. (Luke 20:37, 38) He longs to bring them back to life. (Job 14:15) Jehovah has paid a high price so that we “might . . . have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) We know how deeply Jehovah loves us and cares for us. So rather than abandon Jehovah when we are sick or threatened with death, we turn to him for comfort, wisdom, and strength. That is exactly what Valérie and her husband did.—Ps. 41:3.

<sup>18</sup> When she was 35 years old, Valérie was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer. Consider how love helped her to overcome her fear of death. She relates: “My diagnosis changed our life overnight. I needed major surgery to survive. I consulted many surgeons, but they all refused to

15. Why is it normal to have a fear of death?

16. How does Satan try to exploit our natural fear of death?

17. In line with Romans 8:37-39, why is there no need to fear death?

18. What can you learn from Valérie’s example?

operate without administering blood. I was scared, but in view of God's command, there was no way I would accept a blood transfusion! Throughout my life, Jehovah had shown me so much love. Now I had an opportunity to show my love for him. Every time I would get bad news, it made me even more determined to make Jehovah proud and not let Satan win. I eventually had a successful operation without blood. Though my health issues continue, Jehovah has always provided what we needed. For example, at our congregation meeting on the weekend before my diagnosis, we considered the article 'Meeting Today's Adversities With Courage.'\* This article was a lifesaver for us. We read it over and over again. Articles like this and a good spiritual routine have given my husband and me inner peace and have helped us to stay balanced and make good decisions."

### OVERCOMING OUR FEARS

#### <sup>19</sup> With Jehovah's help, Christians

\* See the October 15, 2012, issue of *The Watchtower*, pp. 7-11.

19. What will soon happen?

earth wide have overcome challenging situations and have been successful in opposing the Devil. (1 Pet. 5:8, 9) You can too. Very soon, Jehovah will direct Jesus and his corulers "to break up the works of the Devil." (1 John 3:8) After that, God's people serving him on earth will "fear nothing and have no cause for terror." (Isa. 54:14; Mic. 4:4) Until then, though, we need to work hard to overcome our fears.

<sup>20</sup> We must continue to strengthen our confidence that Jehovah loves and protects his servants. We will be helped to do this by meditating on and talking about how Jehovah has protected his servants in the past. And we can bear in mind how he has helped us personally to face distressing situations. With Jehovah's help, we **can** overcome our fears! —Ps. 34:4.

20. What will help us to overcome our fears?

**PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS** **Page 16:** A couple from the local congregation bring a meal to a hard-working sister and her family. **Page 17:** The parents of a young brother are opposed to his worship, but he is confident of God's support.

### HOW CAN LOVE HELP US TO OVERCOME OUR . . .

- |   |                |                  |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| ■ fear of not being able to provide for our family? | ■ fear of man? | ■ fear of death? |
|---|----------------|------------------|

**SONG 128**

Enduring to the End

**PREVIEW**

When we think of someone who endured severe trials, we often think of Job. What can we learn from the experiences of that faithful man? We learn that Satan cannot force us to abandon Jehovah. We also learn that Jehovah is always aware of every situation. And just as Jehovah brought Job's trials to an end, He will one day bring all our suffering to an end. If we show by our actions that we are absolutely convinced of these facts, we are among those who truly "hope in Jehovah."

## "Hope in Jehovah"

*"Hope in Jehovah; be courageous and strong of heart."*

—PS. 27:14.

JEHOVAH has given a beautiful hope to all those who love him. Soon he will bring an end to sickness, sorrow, and death. (Rev. 21:3, 4) He will help "the meek" who are hoping in him to transform the earth into a paradise. (Ps. 37:9-11) And he will make it possible for each one of us to have a warm, personal relationship with him that will be even more wonderful than what we enjoy now. What a marvelous hope that is! But what basis do we have for believing that God's promises will come true? Jehovah never breaks a promise. We thus have good reason to "hope in Jehovah."\* (Ps. 27:14) We show this by waiting patiently and joyfully for our God to bring his purpose to completion.—Isa. 55:10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Jehovah has already proved that he keeps his promises. Consider one outstanding example. In the book of Revelation, Jehovah promised that in our day, he would bring together people out of every nation and tribe and tongue, and he would unite them in pure worship. Today, that remarkable group of people is known as the "great crowd." (Rev. 7:9, 10) Although consisting of men, women, and children of different races, languages, and

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\* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** The Hebrew word rendered to "hope" basically means to "wait for" something with eager expectation. It can also convey the idea of trusting someone or relying on him.—Ps. 25:2, 3; 62:5.

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1. (a) What hope has Jehovah given us? (b) What does it mean to "hope in Jehovah"? (See "Expression Explained.")
2. What has Jehovah already done?



backgrounds, that diverse group forms a peaceful, united global brotherhood. (Ps. 133:1; John 10:16) Those of the great crowd are also zealous preachers. They are always ready to share their hope of a better world with anyone who will listen. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Rev. 14:6, 7; 22:17) If you are part of the great crowd, no doubt the hope of better things to come is very precious to you.

<sup>3</sup> The Devil wants to rob you of your hope. His goal is to make you believe that Jehovah does not care about you and that He will not keep his promises. If Satan succeeds in robbing us of our hope, we will lose courage, and we may even stop serving Jehovah. As we will see, the Devil tried to rob Job of his hope and make him stop serving Jehovah.

<sup>4</sup> In this article, we will examine the tactics Satan used in an effort to force Job to break his integrity. **(Read Job 1: 9-12.)** We will also discuss what we can learn from Job's example and why we need to remember that God loves us and will fulfill His promises.

#### SATAN TRIES TO MAKE JOB LOSE HOPE

<sup>5</sup> Life was going well for Job. He enjoyed a close friendship with Jehovah. He had a large, united family, and he was very wealthy. (Job 1:1-5) But in just one day, Job lost nearly everything. First, he lost his wealth. (Job 1:13-17) Then, all his beloved children died. Think about

that tragedy for a moment. Parents are devastated when one of their children dies. So imagine the shock, grief, and despair that Job and his wife felt on learning that all ten of their children had been crushed to death. No wonder Job ripped his clothes apart in mourning and collapsed to the ground!—Job 1: 18-20.

<sup>6</sup> Satan next attacked Job's health and robbed him of his dignity. (Job 2:6-8; 7:5) At one time, Job had been highly respected in his community. People came to him for guidance. (Job 31: 18) Now they avoided him. He was an outcast, rejected by his brothers, his close companions, and even by his own household servants!—Job 19:13, 14, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Satan wanted Job to believe that he was suffering because he had lost Jehovah's approval. For instance, Satan used a strong wind to bring down the house where all ten of Job's children had been enjoying a meal together. (Job 1: 18, 19) He also caused fire to fall from heaven and destroy not only Job's flocks but also the servants who were caring for them. (Job 1:16) The wind and fire obviously came from a supernatural source; hence, Job concluded that Jehovah God must have been that Source. And as a result, Job believed that he had somehow upset Jehovah. Even so, Job refused to curse his heavenly Father. Job acknowledged that over the years he had received many good things from

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3. What is Satan's goal?

4. What will we consider in this article? (Job 1: 9-12)

5-6. What happened to Job in a short period of time?

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7. (a) What did Job believe to be the reason for his suffering, but what did he refuse to do? (b) How might a Christian face a trial that is comparable to what is seen in the accompanying picture?

Jehovah. He therefore reasoned that if he was happy to accept the good, he should also be willing to accept the bad. So he said: “Let the name of Jehovah continue to be praised.” (Job 1:20, 21; 2:10) Up to that point, Job had managed to deal with the severe financial, emotional, and physical challenges. But Satan was not finished with him.

<sup>8</sup> Satan used one more tactic on Job; he incited three false friends to chip away at Job’s sense of self-worth. These men claimed that Job’s suffering proved that he was guilty of various wrongdoings. (Job 22:5-9) They also tried to convince him that even if he was not an evildoer, any efforts he made to please God were of no value at all. (Job 4:18; 22:2, 3; 25:4) In effect, they were trying to make Job doubt that God loved him,

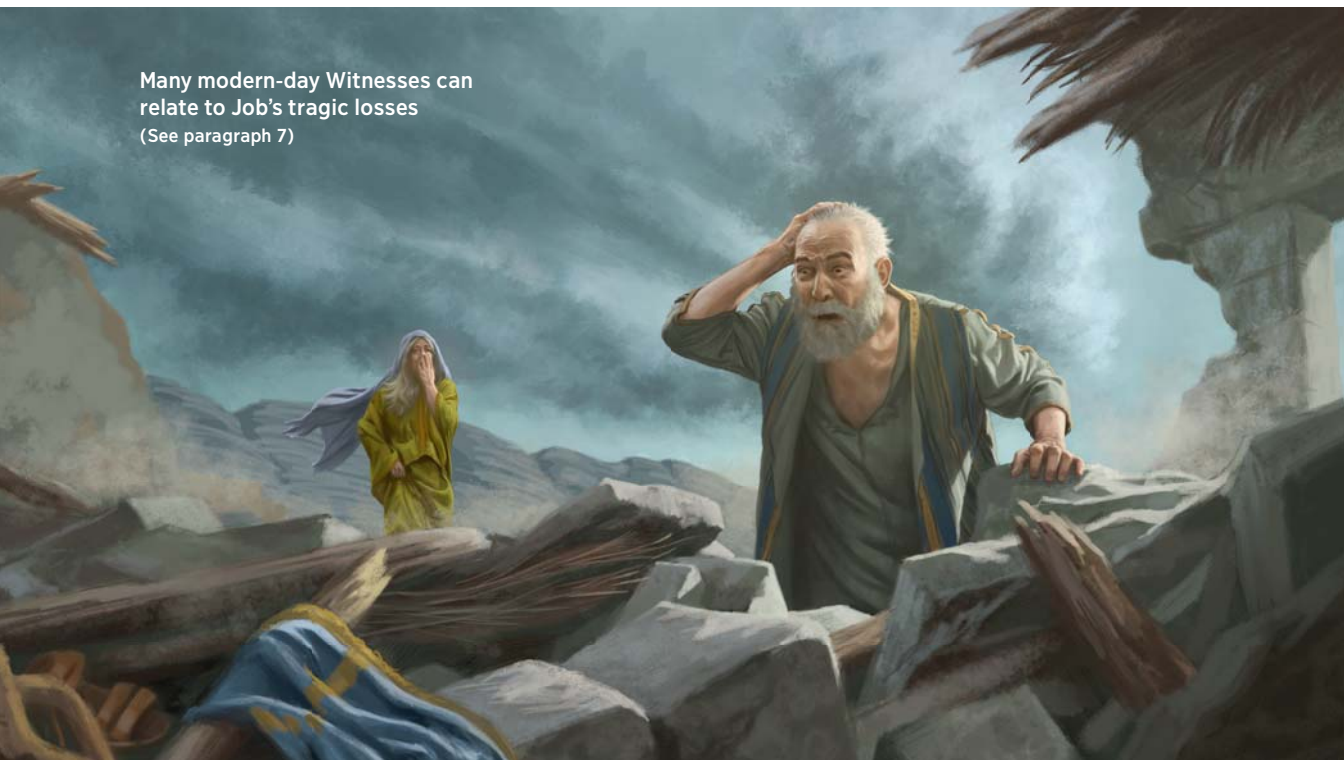
that He would look after him, and that there was value in serving Him. Their words could have made Job feel as if his situation were hopeless.

<sup>9</sup> Imagine the scene. Sitting among the ashes, Job is in constant pain. (Job 2:8) His companions relentlessly attack his character and attempt to destroy his reputation. His trials weigh on him like heavy stones, while his grief over the loss of his children claws at his heart. At first, Job is silent. (Job 2:13-3:1) If Job’s companions interpret his silence as a sign that Job is going to turn his back on his Creator, they are sorely mistaken. At one point, Job—possibly raising his head and looking directly at his false friends—says: “Until I die, I will not renounce my integrity!” (Job 27:5) What helped Job to be so cou-

8. What tactic did Satan next use on Job?

9. What helped Job to be courageous and strong?

Many modern-day Witnesses can relate to Job’s tragic losses  
(See paragraph 7)



rageous and strong despite all his suffering? Even when he was at his lowest point, he never lost hope that his loving God would eventually bring him relief. He knew that even if he died, Jehovah would resurrect him.—Job 14:13-15.

### HOW CAN WE IMITATE JOB?

<sup>10</sup> The account about Job teaches us that Satan cannot force us to abandon Jehovah and that Jehovah is aware of every situation. Job's experience can also help us to have a better understanding of the issues involved. Consider some of the specific lessons that we can learn from Job.

<sup>11</sup> Job proved that if we continue to trust in Jehovah, we can endure any trial and successfully oppose Satan. With what result? The Scriptures assure us that the Devil will flee from us.—**Read James 4:7.**

<sup>12</sup> We need to cling to the resurrection hope. As mentioned in the preceding article, Satan often uses fear of death in an effort to cause us to renounce our integrity. In Job's case, Satan claimed that Job would do anything, even compromise his integrity, to save his life. Satan was wrong. Even in Job's darkest moment when death seemed inevitable, he did not compromise. His confidence in Jehovah's goodness and his strong hope that Jehovah would eventually make things right sustained him. Job had faith that if Jehovah did not set

matters straight while he was alive, He would step in and resurrect Job in the future. The hope of the resurrection was real to Job. If that hope is real to us, not even the threat of death will cause us to break our integrity.

<sup>13</sup> We must pay close attention to the tactics used on Job because Satan uses similar methods on us today. Notice the accusation Satan made: “**A man** [not just Job] will give everything that he has for his life.” (Job 2:4, 5) In effect, Satan claims that we do not really love Jehovah God and that we will turn against Him if it means saving our life. Satan further claims that God does not love us and that He will not notice our efforts to please Him. Being forewarned, we who hope in Jehovah are not fooled by Satan's tactics.

<sup>14</sup> We should view trials as an opportunity to learn about ourselves. The trials that Job faced helped him to identify certain weaknesses and to correct them. For one thing, he learned that he needed to cultivate humility to a greater degree. (Job 42:3) We too can learn a lot about ourselves when we are under trial. A brother named Nikolay,\* who was put in prison despite suffering from severe health problems, says: “A prison is like an X-ray, showing the inner qualities of a Christian.” Once we identify our weaknesses, we can work on correcting them.

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\* Some names have been changed.

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10. What does the account about Job teach us?

11. If we continue to trust in Jehovah, of what can we be assured? (James 4:7)

12. How did the hope of the resurrection strengthen Job?

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13. Why do we need to pay attention to the tactics Satan used on Job?

14. What can trials reveal in us? Illustrate.



Job was blessed for his integrity. He and his wife  
long enjoyed Jehovah's blessing  
(See paragraph 17)

<sup>15</sup> We need to listen to Jehovah, not our enemies. Job paid close attention when Jehovah spoke to him. God reasoned with Job, in effect saying: ‘Do you see my creative power? I am aware of everything that has happened to you. Do you think that I cannot take care of you?’ Job responded humbly and with deep appreciation for Jehovah’s goodness. “My ears have heard about you,” he said, “but now I do see you with my eyes.” (Job 42:5) Job was likely still sitting among the ashes, his body riddled with sores and his children in the grave, when he said those words. Even so, Jehovah confirmed His love for Job and assured him of His approval.—Job 42:7, 8.

15. Whom should we listen to, and why?

<sup>16</sup> Today, too, people may insult us and treat us as if we were worthless. They may attempt to destroy our reputation as individuals or as an organization and “lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against” us. (Matt. 5:11) From Job’s account, we learn that Jehovah has confidence that we will remain loyal to him when we face trials. Jehovah loves us and will never abandon those who hope in him. **(Read Isaiah 49:15, 16.)** Do not pay attention to any slanderous comments made by God’s enemies! James, a brother from Turkey whose family has faced severe trials, says: “We realized that listening to lies about God’s people

16. According to Isaiah 49:15, 16, what should we bear in mind when we face trials?



would discourage us. So we focused on our Kingdom hope and remained active in our service to Jehovah. As a result, we kept our joy.” Like Job, we listen to Jehovah! The lies of our enemies do not extinguish our hope.

### YOUR HOPE WILL SUSTAIN YOU

<sup>17</sup> Job is just one of Jehovah’s servants who remained courageous and strong during severe trials. In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul refers to many others, calling them “a great cloud of witnesses.” (Heb. 12:1) They all went through severe trials; yet, they built an outstanding record of faithfulness to Jehovah. (Heb. 11:36-40) Were their endurance and hard work wasted? Most definitely not! Even though during their lifetime they never saw the fulfillment of all of God’s promises, they continued to hope in Jehovah. And because they were certain that they had gained Jehovah’s approval, they were confident that they would see the promises come

17. What do you learn from the example of the faithful men and women mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11?

true. (Heb. 11:4, 5) Their example can strengthen our resolve to continue hoping in Jehovah.

<sup>18</sup> Today we live in a world that is going from bad to worse. (2 Tim. 3:13) Satan has not finished putting God’s people to the test. Regardless of the challenges that lie ahead, may we be determined to work hard for Jehovah, confident that “we have rested our hope on a living God.” (1 Tim. 4:10) Remember, the outcome that God gave to Job proves “that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful.” (Jas. 5:11) May we too remain loyal to Jehovah, certain that he will reward “those earnestly seeking him.”—**Read Hebrews 11:6.**

18. What are you determined to do? (Hebrews 11:6)

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**PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS** **Page 22:** Job and his wife experience the tragedy of losing their children in death. **Page 24:** Job endured to the end of his trials. He and his wife reflect on the blessings Jehovah gave them and their family.

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### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- |   |  |                           |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| ■ What does it mean to “hope in Jehovah”? | ■ How did Satan try to make Job lose hope? | ■ How can we imitate Job? |
|---|--|---------------------------|

# Let “the Law of Kindness” Motivate You

“THE kindness of the Christian brothers and sisters was everything,” said Lisa.\* She was referring to what first attracted her to the truth. It was similar with Anne, who admitted, “It was more about kindness than doctrine.” Both of these sisters now enjoy reading the Bible and meditating on it, but kindness had a great impact on them.

How can we express kindness that touches the heart of those around us? Let us discuss two ways: with our tongue and with our actions. Then we will consider to whom we should show kindness.

## “THE LAW OF KINDNESS” ON YOUR TONGUE

The capable wife described in Proverbs chapter 31 has “the law of kindness” on her tongue. (Prov. 31:26) She allows this “law” to govern the tone and content of her speech. Fathers too do well to have this “law” on their tongue. Most parents are well-aware that a harsh-sounding statement can have a negative effect on their child. If parents speak in a brusque, cold tone, their child will likely not react well. So to be more appealing and effective, parents do well to strive to speak with kindness.

Whether you are a parent or not, how can you govern your tongue with kindness? We find a clue in the first part of Proverbs 31:26: “She opens her mouth in *wisdom*.” That involves choosing our words and tone of voice wisely. It will

usually help to ask ourselves, ‘Will what I am about to say stir up anger, or will it calm a tense situation?’ (Prov. 15:1) Yes, it is wise to think ahead.

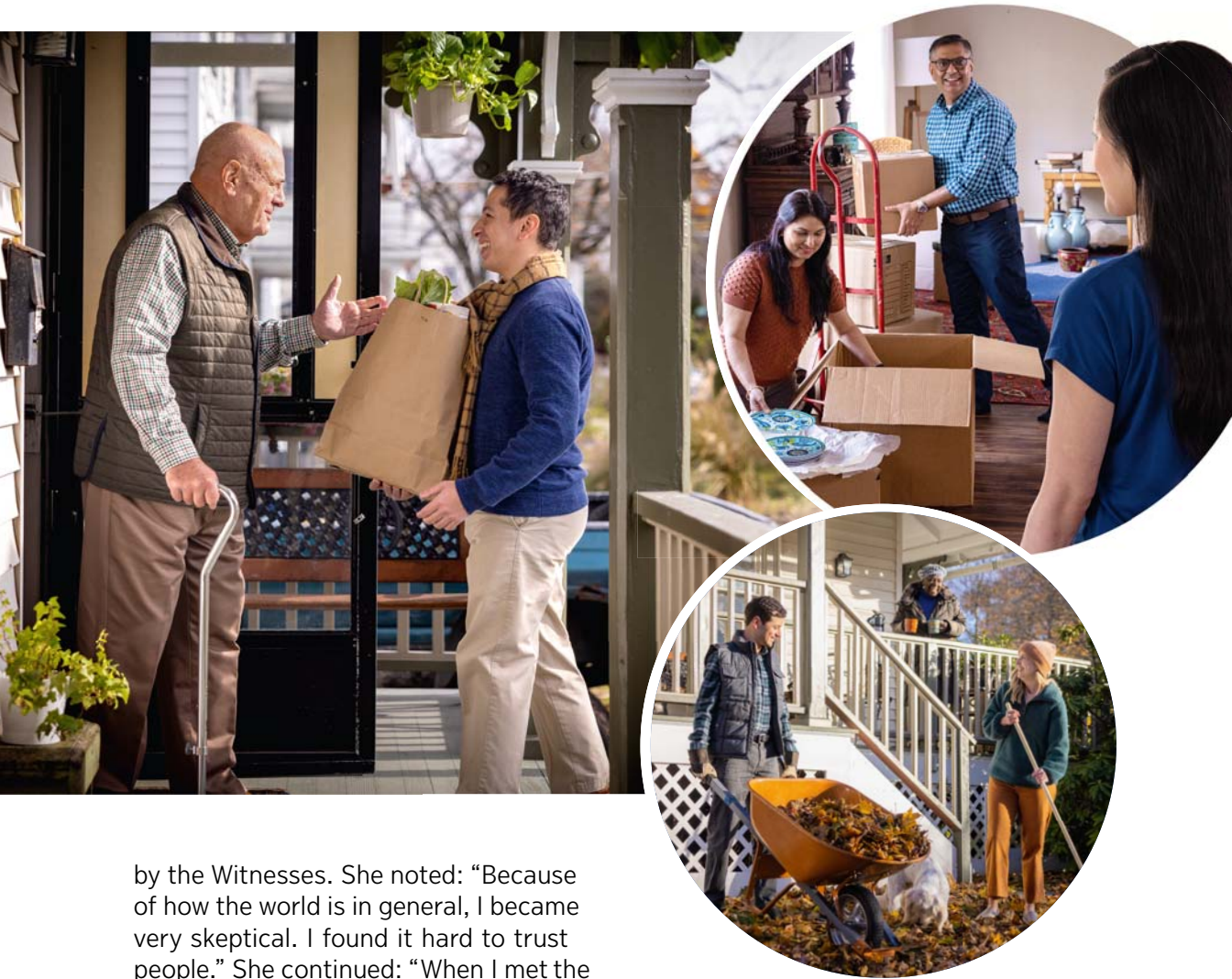
Another proverb states: “Thoughtless speech is like the stabs of a sword.” (Prov. 12:18) When we reflect on how our words and our tone may affect others, we will more likely be able to control what rolls off our tongue. Yes, our applying “the law of kindness” will help us to hold back from using cruel words and a harsh tone. (Eph. 4:31, 32) We will replace negative thoughts and speech with kind words and a positive, warm tone. Jehovah set the example in this regard when he reassured his frightened servant Elijah. The angel representing Jehovah spoke in “a calm, low voice.” (1 Ki. 19:12) Granted, to be kind involves more than just kind speech. We must also perform acts of kindness. How?

## ACTS OF KINDNESS MOTIVATE OTHERS

When we imitate Jehovah, we complement our kind speech with acts of kindness. (Eph. 4:32; 5:1, 2) Lisa, quoted earlier, described the kindness shown by the Witnesses. “When our family was forced to move on very short notice, two couples in the congregation took time off from work to help us pack. At that time, I wasn’t even studying the Bible!” Those acts of kindness moved Lisa to make a closer examination of the truth.

Anne, mentioned at the outset, also appreciated the kindness shown to her

\* Names have been changed.



by the Witnesses. She noted: “Because of how the world is in general, I became very skeptical. I found it hard to trust people.” She continued: “When I met the Witnesses, I questioned their motives. I wondered, ‘Why are they showing interest in me?’ But my Bible teacher’s genuine kindness moved me to trust her.” With what good result? “Later, I started focusing on what I was learning.”

Note that Lisa and Anne were deeply touched by the loving acts of kindness from individuals in the congregation, and that had a bearing on their learning the truth. The kindness the congregation showed them helped to open their heart.

### LEARN TO EXPRESS GODLY KINDNESS TO OTHERS

Some may be more inclined to use kind words and to smile because of their cultural background. Such polite formalities motivated by custom or by a natural tendency are commendable. But if we are motivated solely by such, it may not indicate *godly* kindness.—Compare Acts 28:2.

True godly kindness is an aspect of the fruitage of God's holy spirit. (Gal. 5:22, 23) So cultivating kindness involves working along with the spirit's influence. That harmonizes with our desire to imitate Jehovah and Jesus. And as Christians, we have an active interest in others. Hence, we are motivated by both love for Jehovah God and love for our fellow man. Our kindness then becomes a powerful quality that comes from the heart and that God approves of.

### EXPRESSING KINDNESS TO WHOM?

It may seem natural to show kindness to those who have been kind to us or to those we know. (2 Sam. 2:6) One way is to thank them. (Col. 3:15) But what if we feel that someone does not deserve an expression of kindness?

Consider this: Jehovah sets the supreme example in extending undeserved kindness, and his written Word teaches us an important lesson about displaying this quality. The expression "undeserved kindness" is used scores of times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. How does God show us kindness?

Think about the millions upon millions of humans to whom Jehovah has been expressing his kindness by providing them with what they need to stay alive. (Matt. 5:45) In fact, even before humans acknowledged Jehovah, he expressed kindness to them. (Eph. 2:4, 5, 8) For example, he gave his best, his only-begotten Son, for all mankind. The apostle Paul wrote that Jehovah provided the ransom "according to the riches of his undeserved kindness." (Eph. 1:7) Furthermore, though we sin and disappoint Jehovah, he continues to guide and teach us. His instruction and words

are like "gentle rains." (Deut. 32:2) We certainly cannot fully repay him for all the kindness he is showing us. And the reality is that we depend on Jehovah's kindness for our future.—Compare 1 Peter 1:13.

Without doubt, Jehovah's kindness is endearing and motivating. As a result, rather than be selective about those to whom we express kindness, we should strive to imitate Jehovah by making kindness a part of our daily way of life. (1 Thess. 5:15) When we show kindness consistently, we are like a warm fire on a cold day. We are a comfort to our family members, fellow worshippers, workmates, schoolmates, and neighbors.

Think of those in your family or in the congregation who will flourish because of your kind words and acts. There may be someone in your congregation who especially needs help to care for the home and garden or to do a regular activity such as shopping. In addition, when you meet someone in your ministry who needs assistance, could you in some way offer practical help?

In imitation of Jehovah, may our words and actions always be governed by "the law of kindness."



## Would the Romans permit a normal burial for someone, such as Jesus, whom they had executed on the stake?

MANY are familiar with the account of Jesus' being hung between two criminals and executed on a stake. (Matt. 27:35-38) There has been controversy, though, over the accuracy of the Bible account that Jesus' corpse was thereafter prepared for burial and put in a tomb.—Mark 15:42-46.

Some critics of the Gospels have doubted that the one executed would have been allowed to receive a proper burial, such as in a tomb. Instead, a different treatment was thought more likely. Journalist Ariel Sabar, writing in *Smithsonian* magazine, explains the background of that view: "Crucifixion was a punishment reserved for the dregs of society, and some experts had scoffed at the idea that Romans would accord anyone so dispatched the dignity of a proper interment." The Romans wanted to subject condemned criminals to the worst possible humiliation, so the bodies would often have been left on the stake for scavenging animals. The remains might thereafter merely be tossed into a common grave.

Archaeology, however, has revealed something different, at least about the remains of some Jews who were put to death. In 1968 the skeletal remains of a man executed in the first century came to light. They were found in a typical Jewish family tomb near Jerusalem. The remains were in an ossuary, or bone box. A heel bone was among the remains. It was nailed to a wooden board by an 11.5 centimeter (4.5 in.) iron spike. "The heel, which belonged to a man named Yehochanan," says Sabar, "helped



settle a long-simmering debate about the plausibility of Gospel accounts of Jesus's tomb burial." Significantly, "Yehochanan's heel offered an example of a crucified man from Jesus's day for whom the Romans permitted Jewish burial."

There might be differing views about what this heel bone suggests regarding the position of Jesus on the stake. But what is clear is that some executed criminals did receive a burial and were not simply discarded. Clearly, what the Bible says about Jesus' body being laid in a proper tomb is trustworthy. The evidence backs up what the Bible says.

More important, Jehovah had foretold that Jesus would be buried in the tomb of a rich man, and no one can prevent God's word from being fulfilled.—Isa. 53:9; 55:11.



## How were years and months determined in Bible times?

FOR the Hebrews in the Promised Land, the **secular** year began with plowing and sowing, which occurred in what is now September/October.

A lunar calendar of 12 months (consisting of 29 or 30 days each) results in a year that is shorter than a true solar year. Various methods have been used to align the two. This can be done by adding extra days or by periodically inserting an additional month, perhaps before the start of the next year. Such a system coordinates the calendar with the seasons when crops are planted or harvested.

In Moses' time, however, God told His people that the **religious** year was to begin with the month of Abib, or Nisan, in the spring. (Ex. 12:2; 13:4) A festival that took place in this month involved the barley harvest.—Ex. 23:15, 16.

"The rule according to which it was decided whether to intercalate or not was very simple," says scholar Emil Schürer, in his book *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*. "The feast of Passover, to be celebrated at full moon in the month of Nisan (14 Nisan), must always fall after the vernal [or, spring] equinox . . . If, therefore, it was noticed towards the end of the year that Passover would fall before the vernal equinox, the intercalation of a [13th] month before Nisan was decreed."

Jehovah's Witnesses take this rule into consideration when determining the appropriate date for the Lord's Evening Meal, which occurs in the spring and corresponds to Nisan 14 on the Hebrew calendar. Con-

gregations around the globe are informed of this date in advance.\*

But how did the Hebrews know when one month would end and a new month would begin? Today you might simply look at a printed calendar or a calendar app on your electronic device. However, in Bible times, it was not that simple.

At the time of the Flood, months were considered to be 30 days long. (Gen. 7:11, 24; 8:3, 4) Later, among the Hebrews the calendar month was not fixed at 30 days. For the Hebrew calendar, a month began at the visible appearance of the crescent of the new moon. That worked out to be 29 or 30 days after the start of the preceding month.

On one occasion, both David and Jonathan referred to a month, saying: "Tomorrow is the new moon." (1 Sam. 20:5, 18) So it seems that by the 11th century B.C.E., the months were calculated in advance. How would the average Israelite be able to determine when a new month started? The Mishnah, a compilation of Jewish oral law and tradition, provides some information. It indicates that in postexilic times, the Sanhedrin (the Jewish high court) was involved. During the seven months in which festivals were held, the court met on the 30th day of the month. Those men were responsible for determining when the next month would begin. On what basis?

Men who were posted at vantage points around Jerusalem watched the night sky for the first sliver of a new moon. They would quickly alert the Sanhedrin. When the group in this court felt that they had sufficient testimony that a new moon had been sighted, they announced the start of a new month. What, though, if clouds or fog obscured the watchmen's view, preventing them from seeing the crescent of the new moon? The month then in progress was de-

\* See *The Watchtower* of February 15, 1990, p. 15, and "Questions From Readers" in the issue of June 15, 1977.

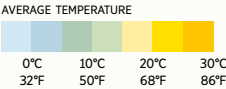
clared to have 30 days, and the new month could begin.

The Mishnah explains that the Sanhedrin's decision was announced by means of a fire signal that was lit on the Mount of Olives, close to Jerusalem. At other high points throughout Israel, bonfires would be used to spread the news. In later periods, messengers were dispatched. Thus Jews in

Jerusalem, throughout Israel, and in scattered communities were made aware of the start of a new month. All could then observe seasonal festivals at the same time.

You may find the accompanying chart helpful in understanding how the Hebrew months, festivals, and seasons were all interconnected.

# HEBREW CALENDAR



<div> APR. MAY JUNE JULY AUG. SEPT. OCT. NOV. DEC. JAN. FEB. MAR. </div>	<b>NISAN</b> (ABIB)	<b>14</b> Passover <b>15-21</b> Unleavened Bread <b>16</b> Offering of firstfruits	Jordan swells from rains, melting snow		Barley	
	<b>IYYAR</b> (ZIV)	<b>14</b> Late Passover	Dry season begins, mostly clear skies		Wheat	
	<b>SIVAN</b>	<b>6</b> Festival of Weeks (Pentecost)	Summer heat, clear air		Wheat, early figs	
	<b>TAMMUZ</b>		Heat increases, heavy dews in areas		First grapes	
	<b>AB</b>		Heat reaches maximum		Summer fruits	
	<b>ELUL</b>		Heat continues		Dates, grapes, and figs	
	<b>TISHRI</b> (ETHANIM)	<b>1</b> Trumpet blast <b>10</b> Day of Atonement <b>15-21</b> Festival of Booths <b>22</b> Solemn assembly	Summer ends, early rains begin		Plowing	
	<b>HESHVAN</b> (BUL)		Light rains		Olives	
	<b>CHISLEV</b>	<b>25</b> Festival of Dedication	Rain increases, frost, mountain snows		Flocks wintered	
	<b>TEBETH</b>		Maximum cold, rainy, mountain snows		Vegetation developing	
	<b>SHEBAT</b>		Cold weather lessens, rain continues		Almond blossoms	
	<b>ADAR</b>	<b>14, 15</b> Purim	Frequent thunder and hail		Flax	
	<b>VEADAR</b>	Intercalary month added seven times in 19 years				

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