

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



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HAITI

COVER: On the veranda of a home in Camp Perrin, a retired couple conduct a Bible study. Some Haitians who have lived overseas, like this couple, are moving back to their homeland to serve where the need is greater

1:557

RATIO OF PUBLISHERS TO
POPULATION IN HAITI

17,954

PUBLISHERS

35,735

BIBLE STUDIES

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STUDY ARTICLES

■ Be Courageous—Jehovah Is With You!

Many individuals mentioned in the Scriptures showed faith and courage. By examining some of their experiences, we will be strengthened to exercise faith and to serve Jehovah courageously. This discussion highlights our yeartext for 2013.

■ Let Nothing Distance You From Jehovah

■ Keep Drawing Close to Jehovah

There are many things in life we cannot choose, including our parents, our siblings, and our place of birth. Our intimacy with Jehovah is different. We can choose whether to be close to him or not. These articles will discuss seven areas of life in which we should let nothing distance us from Jehovah.

■ Serving Without Regrets

All of us have done things that we wish we could do over and do differently. However, we need not allow such regrets to paralyze us now in our service to God. In this article, we will learn from the apostle Paul's example how we can keep on serving Jehovah without regrets.

■ Christian Elders—‘Fellow Workers for Our Joy’

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul explained that he and his close associates were ‘fellow workers for their joy.’ (2 Cor. 1:24) How should those words of Paul especially affect Christian elders? And how may each one of us add to a spirit of joy in the congregation? The answers to these questions will be considered in this article.

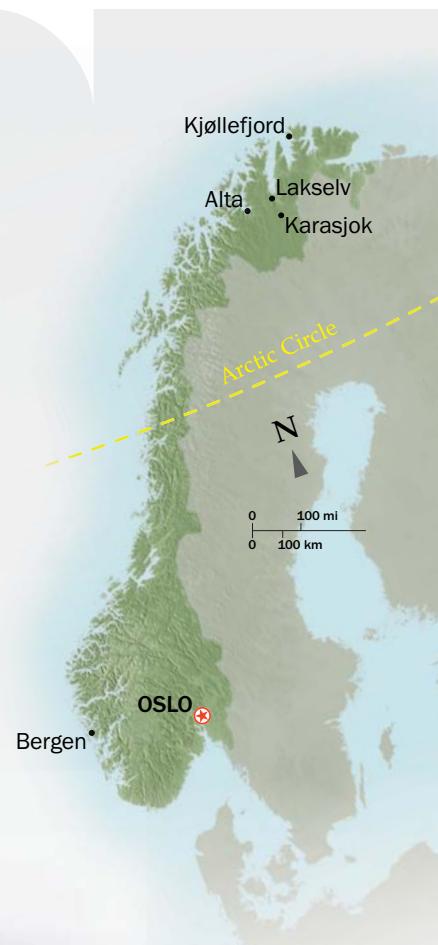
THEY OFFERED
THEMSELVES
WILLINGLY



in Norway

A FEW years ago, **Roald** and **Elsebeth**, a couple then in their late 40's, lived comfortably in Bergen, Norway's second-largest city. Together with their daughter and son, **Isabel** and **Fabian**, they faithfully shared in the activities of the congregation. Roald served as an elder and Elsebeth as a pioneer, while Isabel and Fabian did well as publishers.

However, in September 2009, the family decided to do something different—preach for a week in an isolated area. So Roald and Elsebeth together with Fabian, then aged 18, traveled to Nordkyn, a peninsula situated in the county of Finnmark, above the Arctic Circle. There, in the village of Kjøllefjord, they preached alongside other brothers and sisters who had also come to that isolated region to share in the preaching work. “At the start of that week,” recalls Roald, “I felt quite satisfied that I had managed to arrange my affairs in such a way that I could share in this special activity for a



(Left) Roald and Fabian
(Above) Elsebeth and Isabel

whole week." But later that same week, Roald began to feel uneasy. What happened?

AN UNEXPECTED QUESTION

"Out of the blue," relates Roald, "Mario, a pioneer serving in Finnmark, asked us if we would be willing to move to a town named Lakslev to help the congregation of 23 publishers there." Roald was taken aback by the unexpected question. He explains: "Elsebeth and I had thought about the possibility of serving where the need was greater—but that would be later when the children had left home." Still, even during the few days he had been preaching in this isolated region, Roald could see that people were willing to learn about Jehovah. They needed help now—not later. "The question bothered my conscience and even robbed me of my sleep for several nights," he recalls. Then Mario drove Roald and his family to Lakslev, about 150 miles (240 km) south of Kjøllefjord. Mario wanted the visitors to see for themselves the small congregation there.

In Lakslev, Andreas, one of the two local elders, showed the visitors the area and the Kingdom Hall. The congregation gave them a warm reception and told Roald and Elsebeth that they would love it if their family could move there to help with the Kingdom work. With a smile, Andreas said that he had already arranged a job interview for Roald and Fabian! What would the visitors do?

WHAT CHOICE TO MAKE?

Fabian's first reaction was: "I don't have a desire to move here." The thought of leaving his close friends with whom he had grown up in his home congregation and of living in a small town did not appeal to him. Also, he had not finished his training to become an electrician. However, when Isabel (then aged 21) was asked what she thought about moving, she exclaimed: "That's exactly what I have always wanted to do!" But then, says Isabel: "When I thought more about it, I wondered, 'Is this really a good idea? Will I miss my friends? Should I just stay in my congregation

where things are convenient and predictable?'" What was Elsebeth's reaction to the invitation? "I felt that Jehovah had given our family an assignment," she says, "but I also thought about our newly renovated house and all the things in it that we had obtained during the last 25 years."

When the special week was over, Roald and his family returned to Bergen, but they could not stop thinking about their Christian brothers and sisters in Lakslev, some 1,300 miles (2,100 km) away. "I said many prayers to Jehovah," says Elsebeth, "and I kept in touch with the friends we had met by exchanging pictures and experiences." Says Roald: "I needed time to let the thought of moving sink in. Also, I had to consider if it would be possible in practical terms. How would we maintain ourselves? I prayed a lot to Jehovah and spoke with my family and with experienced brothers." Fabian recalls: "The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I really didn't have a valid reason to say no. I prayed often to Jehovah, and the desire to move gradually became stronger." And Isabel? To prepare herself for the possible move, she began pioneering in her hometown. After six months of pioneering, during which she also spent much time on personal Bible study, she felt ready to make the big move.

TAKING STEPS TO REACH THEIR GOAL

As the desire to serve where there is a greater need for publishers grew, the family took steps to reach their goal. Roald had a well-paying job that he really enjoyed, but he asked for a year-long leave of absence. However, his employer asked him to stay on as a part-time worker—two weeks on, six weeks off. "My income was drastically reduced, but it worked out fine," says Roald.

Elsebeth relates: "My husband asked me to try to find a house in Lakslev and to rent out our house in Bergen. It took a lot of time and effort, but we succeeded. After a while, the children found part-time jobs," she adds, "and they help us cover the expenses for food and transportation."



(Left) Knut and Lisbeth studying with a family in Uganda

(Above) Marelius and Kesia witnessing to a Sami woman in Norway

Says Isabel: “Since the town we moved to is small, my biggest challenge was to find work to support myself as a pioneer. At times, it seemed hopeless.” Still, by taking any small part-time job she could find—nine during the first year—Isabel was able to cover her expenses. How did things work out for Fabian? “To complete my schooling as an electrician, I still needed to work as an apprentice. I did so in Lakselv. Later, I passed my exam and found a part-time job as an electrician.”

HOW OTHERS EXPANDED THEIR SERVICE

Marelius and his wife, **Kesia**, also wanted to serve where there was a greater need for publishers. Says Marelius, now aged 29: “Convention talks and interviews about pioneering moved me to think about expanding my service.” However, for Kesia, now aged 26, the idea of moving away from family was an obstacle. “I dreaded the thought of being far away from the people I love,” she says. Furthermore, Marelius worked full-time to pay the mortgage on their house. He says: “With the help of Jehovah and many prayers in which we asked for his help to make changes, we were able to make the move.” First, they spent more time on Bible study. Then, the couple sold their house, quit their jobs, and moved in August 2011 to the city of Alta, in northern Norway. There, to support themselves as pioneers, Mare-

Ius works as an accountant and Kesia works in a store.

Knut and **Lisbeth**, a couple now in their mid-30’s, were touched by Yearbook accounts about those who serve where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers. “These experiences made us think about serving in a foreign country,” says Lisbeth, “but I hesitated because I doubted that this was something an ordinary person like me could do.” Still, they took steps to reach their goal. Says Knut: “We sold our apartment and, to save funds, moved in with my mother. Later, to get a taste of serving in a foreign territory, we moved for one year to an English-language congregation in Bergen, where we stayed with Lisbeth’s mother.” Before long, Knut and Lisbeth felt ready to make the move, and a big one at that—to Uganda. They return to Norway two months a year to work. That way they have sufficient funds to live and preach full-time in Uganda the rest of the year.

“TASTE AND SEE THAT JEHOVAH IS GOOD”

How did things turn out for these willing workers? Roald says: “We spend much more time together as a family in this isolated area than we did in Bergen. Our family has grown closer. Seeing the spiritual progress of our children has been a blessing.” He adds: “Also, we now have a more relaxed attitude toward material things. They do not mean as much as we thought they did.”

Applying Bible principles can help you to prepare for serving where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers:

- Pray to Jehovah for motivation and “practical wisdom.”—Prov. 3:21; Phil. 2:13; Jas. 1:5.

- Seek advice from wise fellow believers. “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise.”—Prov. 12:15; 13:20.
- Make definite plans. “The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage.”—Prov. 21:5.

When you take these steps, you can be sure that Jehovah will bless your efforts!—Prov. 16:3.



“Our family has grown closer.”—Roald

Elsebeth saw the need to learn another language. Why? The territory of the Lakselv Congregation includes the village of Karasjok, in the heartland of the Sami—the indigenous people of the northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. So to make it easier to reach these indigenous people, Elsebeth took a course in the Sami language. Now she is able to have a simple conversation in that language. Is she enjoying her new territory? She says, beaming: “I conduct six Bible studies. Where else would I want to be than right here!”

Fabian, who now serves as a pioneer and a ministerial servant, relates that he and Isabel helped three teenagers in their new congregation who needed encouragement to get more involved in the congregation’s activities. All three youths are now active in the ministry. In fact, two of them are baptized and served as auxiliary pioneers in March 2012. One of the teenagers who had been drifting away from the truth thanked Fabian and Isabel for helping her to “get going again.” Says

Fabian: “I was really moved when she said that. What a joy to help someone!” Isabel notes: “In this assignment, I really have ‘tasted and seen that Jehovah is good.’” (Ps. 34:8) She adds: “On top of that, serving here is really fun!”

Marelius and Kesia now have a simpler standard of living but a richer life. The congregation in Alta, to which they moved, now has 41 publishers. Marelius says: “Looking back, it’s so encouraging to see how much our life has changed. We thank Jehovah that we can serve him as pioneers here. Nothing is more fulfilling.” Kesia adds: “I learned to trust more completely in Jehovah, and he has taken good care of us. I also found that living farther away from my relatives helps me to value the moments that we spend together even more. I’ve never regretted our decision.”

And how are Knut and Lisbeth doing in Uganda? Knut relates: “It took time to adjust to the new environment and culture. Water, electricity, and stomach problems—they all come and go, but we can conduct as many Bible studies as we want!” Lisbeth says: “Just half an hour from where we live, there are territories that have never been reached with the good news. Yet, when we go there, we find people reading the Bible, asking us to teach them. Teaching such humble individuals the Bible’s message is a joy beyond compare!”

How happy our Leader, Christ Jesus, must be to observe from heaven how the preaching work that he started is being carried out in ever more regions of the earth! Yes, for all of God’s people, it is a heartfelt joy to offer themselves willingly to carry out Jesus’ command to “make disciples of people of all the nations.”—Matt. 28:19, 20.



"Be courageous and strong. . . . Jehovah your God is with you." —JOSH. 1:9.

HOW WOULD YOU REPLY?

What did Joshua have to do to sustain his faith and courage?

What examples of courage have impressed you?

Whose example of faith and courage can help you to do the preaching work?

BE COURAGEOUS JEHOVAH IS WITH YOU!

JEHOVAH'S service brings us joy. Yet, we do face hardships common to mankind, and we may "suffer for the sake of righteousness." (1 Pet. 3:14; 5:8, 9; 1 Cor. 10:13) To cope with such trials successfully, we need faith and courage.

² What is faith? The apostle Paul wrote: "Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld." (Heb. 11:1) Another translation reads: "Faith is the title-deed to the things we hope for. Faith is being sure of things we cannot see." (*The Simple English Bible*) If property has been deeded to us, we are confident that we own it. Since we have faith that God always fulfills his word, it is as though we are holding a valuable deed. Our faith makes us certain that we *will* see the fulfillment of the Bible-based promises we hope for, and we are *sure* about spiritual realities, although we cannot see them.

³ Courage has been defined as "spiritual, emotional, and moral fortitude to speak and act without fear in the face of obstacles and dangers." (*The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*) If we have courage, we are strong, valiant, even bold at times. —Mark 6:49, 50; 2 Tim. 1:7.

⁴ Faith and courage are desirable qualities. But suppose we sense a personal need for more faith and do not feel courageous. Well, thousands of individuals of Bible record have been exemplary in displaying these qualities. So one way to strengthen

1, 2. (a) What qualities will help us to cope with trials?
(b) How would you define faith? Illustrate.

3, 4. (a) What is courage? (b) What is one way to strengthen our faith and courage?

our faith and courage is to consider some of those examples.

JEHOVAH WAS WITH JOSHUA

5 Let us turn the clock back some 35 centuries. Forty years have passed since millions of Israelites were delivered from Egyptian bondage under the mighty hand of Jehovah. The prophet Moses has taken the lead. Now at the age of 120, he views the Promised Land from a distance and then dies atop Mount Nebo. His successor is Joshua, a man “full of the spirit of wisdom.” (Deut. 34:1-9) The Israelites are about to take possession of Canaan. To succeed as their leader, Joshua will need God-given wisdom. He will also have to exercise faith in Jehovah and prove to be courageous and strong.—Deut. 31:22, 23.

6 The wisdom, courage, and faith shown by Joshua during the long conquest of Canaan must have strengthened the Israelites. In addition to valor in battle, however, they needed what might be called quiet courage to do what Joshua urged them to do. At the end of his life, in his farewell address, he said: “You must be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses by never turning away from it to the right or to the left.” (Josh. 23:6) We too need the courage to obey Jehovah at all times. This includes occasions when mere men demand that we act contrary to God’s will. (*Read Acts 4:18-20; 5:29.*) If we prayerfully rely on Jehovah, he will help us to take such a courageous stand.

5. To succeed in his assignment, what did Joshua need?

6. (a) Joshua 23:6 calls for courage to do what? (b) What do we learn from the words of Acts 4:18-20 and Acts 5:29?

HOW WE CAN MAKE OUR WAY SUCCESSFUL

7 To have the courage needed to do God’s will, we must study and apply his Word. That is what Joshua was told to do when he became Moses’ successor: “Be courageous and very strong to take care to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. . . . This book of the law should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an

Our yeartext for 2013:
“Be courageous and
strong. . . . Jehovah your
God is with you.”
—Joshua 1:9

undertone read in it day and night, in order that you may take care to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way successful and then you will act wisely.” (Josh. 1:7, 8) Joshua followed that counsel, and ‘his way was successful.’ If we do likewise, we will have greater courage and success in God’s service.

8 Joshua must have been greatly strengthened when he heard Jehovah’s further words: “Be courageous and strong. Do not suffer shock or be terrified, for Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.” (Josh. 1:9) Jehovah is with us too. So let us “not suffer shock or be terrified” regardless of our trials.

7. To act with courage and have success, Joshua needed to do what?

8. The yeartext for 2013 is drawn from what scripture, and how do you feel that those words will help you?

Especially noteworthy is the statement: "Be courageous and strong. . . . Jehovah your God is with you." Those words of Joshua 1:9 have been chosen as the year-text for 2013. They will surely strengthen us in the months ahead, as will the words and actions of other examples of faith and courage.

THEY COURAGEOUSLY TOOK THEIR STAND

9 When Joshua sent two spies into Canaan, Rahab the prostitute hid them and misdirected their enemies. Because of her acts of faith and courage, she and her household were spared when the city of Jericho fell to the Israelites. (Heb. 11: 30, 31; Jas. 2:25) Of course, Rahab abandoned her immoral life so as to please Jehovah. Some who have become Christians have had the faith, courage, and moral strength to make similar changes to please God.

10 After Joshua's death, the Moabitess Ruth courageously took her stand for true worship. As the widow of an Israelite, she likely knew something about Jehovah. Her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, had lived in Moab but decided to move back to the Israelite town of Bethlehem. Along the road, Naomi urged Ruth to return to her own people, but the Moabitess replied: "Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from accompanying you . . . Your people will be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16) Ruth meant that. In time, Naomi's kinsman Boaz married Ruth, who bore a son and became an ancestor of David and of Jesus. Yes, Jehovah

9. In what ways did Rahab show faith and courage?

10. Under what circumstances did Ruth take her stand for true worship, resulting in what blessings for her?

blesses acts of faith and courage.—Ruth 2:12; 4:17-22; Matt. 1:1-6.

MANY RISKED THEIR LIVES!

11 Our courage and faith are strengthened when we see that God is with those who put his interests and the welfare of fellow believers ahead of their own concerns. For example, consider High Priest Jehoiada and his wife, Jehosheba. After King Ahaziah died, Athaliah, his mother, killed the remaining royal offspring except Jehoash and seized the throne. Jehoiada and Jehosheba had taken the risk of rescuing Ahaziah's son Jehoash and had kept him hidden for six years. In the seventh year, Jehoiada had Jehoash proclaimed king and had Athaliah put to death. (2 Ki. 11:1-16) Jehoiada later supported King Jehoash in repairing the temple. And when Jehoiada died at 130 years of age, he was buried with the kings "because he had done good in Israel and with the true God and His house." (2 Chron. 24:15, 16) Moreover, the courageous deeds of Jehoiada and his wife preserved the royal line from David to the Messiah.

12 Ebed-melech, a eunuch in the house of King Zedekiah, risked his life for Jeremiah. The king had surrendered Jeremiah to the princes of Judah, who falsely charged him with sedition and cast him into a miry cistern, there to die. (Jer. 38:4-6) Despite the danger in which it placed him because of the existing hatred for Jeremiah, Ebed-melech appealed to Zedekiah in behalf of the prophet. Zedekiah responded favorably and had 30 men accompany Ebed-melech to rescue Jeremiah. Through the prophet, God assured Ebed-melech that he would not

11. How did Jehoiada and Jehosheba manifest courage, and what did this accomplish?

12. What courageous action did Ebed-melech take?

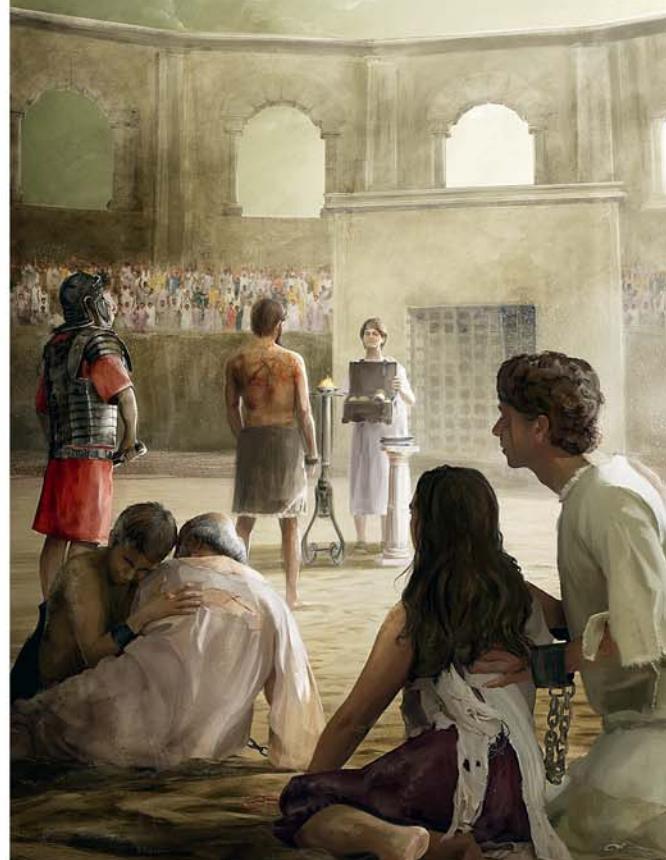
perish during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. (Jer. 39:15-18) Godly courage is rewarded.

13 In the seventh century B.C.E., three Hebrew servants of Jehovah were given clear evidence that God rewards faith and courage. King Nebuchadnezzar assembled Babylon's dignitaries and demanded that they worship a towering image of gold. Any who would not do so were to die in a fiery furnace. The three Hebrews respectfully told Nebuchadnezzar: "Our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. Out of the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king, he will rescue us. But if not, let it become known to you, O king, that your gods are not the ones we are serving, and the image of gold that you have set up we will not worship." (Dan. 3:16-18) The thrilling rescue of the three Hebrews is vividly described at Daniel 3: 19-30. Although we are not likely to be threatened with death in a fiery furnace, we do face tests of integrity and can be sure that God will bless us for our faith and courage.

14 Daniel showed faith and courage when his enemies prevailed upon King Darius to issue a decree that "whoever makes a petition to any god or man for thirty days except to you, O king, should be thrown to the lions' pit." As soon as Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he "entered into his house, and, the windows in his roof chamber being open for him toward Jerusalem, even three times in a day he was kneeling on his knees and praying and offering praise before his God, as he had been regularly doing prior to this."

13. The three Hebrews took what courageous stand, and how can we benefit from their experience?

14. According to Daniel chapter 6, how did Daniel act courageously, and with what result?



For the early Christians, compromising was not an option

(Dan. 6:6-10) Courageous Daniel ended up in a lions' pit—but Jehovah delivered him.—Dan. 6:16-23.

15 Under circumstances not disclosed in the Bible, Aquila and Priscilla 'risked their necks for Paul's soul.' (Acts 18:2; Rom. 16:3, 4) They courageously acted in harmony with Jesus' words: "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34) The Mosaic Law required that a person love his neighbor as he loved himself. (Lev. 19:18) But Jesus' com-

15. (a) Aquila and Priscilla set what example of faith and courage? (b) What is meant by Jesus' words recorded at John 13:34, and how have many Christians shown such love?

mandment was "new" in describing love that would go to the point of giving our life for others, as he did. Many Christians have shown love by courageously 'risking their necks' to avoid exposing fellow believers to brutal treatment or death at enemy hands.—*Read 1 John 3:16.*

16 Like Jesus, early Christians courageously rendered worship only to Jehovah. (Matt. 4:8-10) They refused to burn incense in honor of the Roman emperor. (See picture.) "Very few of the Christians recanted," wrote Daniel P. Mannix, "although an altar with a fire burning on it was generally kept in the arena for their convenience. All a prisoner had to do was scatter a pinch of incense on the flame and he was given a Certificate of Sacrifice and turned free. It was also carefully explained to him that he was not worshiping the emperor; merely acknowledging the divine character of the emperor as head of the Roman state. Still, almost no Christians availed themselves of the chance to escape."—*Those About to Die.*

17 Modern Christians held in Nazi concentration camps with possible death facing them were given repeated opportunities to gain their freedom by signing a declaration renouncing Jehovah. But few signed. Risking death during a genocide in Rwanda in recent times, Tutsi and Hutu Witnesses protected one another. Such trials call for courage and faith.

REMEMBER, JEHOVAH IS WITH US!

18 We are now privileged to share in

16, 17. Some early followers of Christ faced what test of faith, and how does this compare with the experience of certain Christians in our day?

18, 19. What Biblical examples of faith and courage can help us to carry out our preaching work?

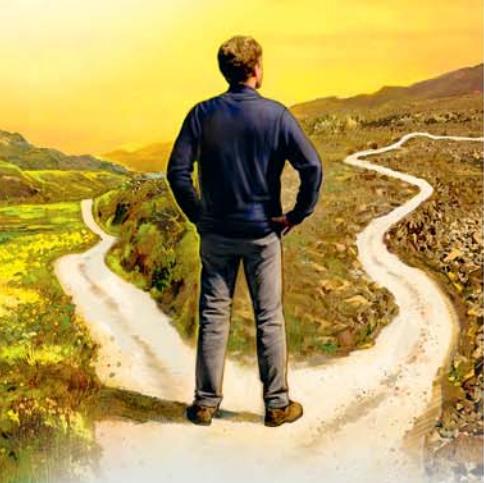
the greatest work ever entrusted to God's human servants—that of declaring the Kingdom message and making disciples. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) How grateful we are for Jesus' matchless example! He "went journeying from city to city and from village to village, preaching and declaring the good news of the kingdom of God." (Luke 8:1) Like him, we need faith and courage in order to preach the Kingdom message. With God's help, we can be like courageous Noah, an intrepid "preacher of righteousness" to "a world of ungodly people" about to perish in a global deluge. —2 Pet. 2:4, 5.

19 Prayer helps us to carry out the preaching work. When certain persecuted followers of Christ prayed that they might 'speak God's word with boldness,' that plea was answered. (*Read Acts 4:29-31.*) If you are somewhat timid about preaching from house to house, Jehovah will answer your prayers for greater faith and courage.—*Read Psalm 66:19, 20.**

20 It is challenging to pursue a godly course in the face of trials that beset us in this evil and troubled world. However, we are not alone. God is with us. So is his Son, the Head of the congregation. We also have over 7,000,000 fellow Witnesses of Jehovah worldwide. With them, let us keep on exercising faith and declaring the good news while we bear in mind our 2013 yeartext: "Be courageous and strong. . . . Jehovah your God is with you."—Josh. 1:9.

* See more examples of courage in the article "Be Courageous and Very Strong" in *The Watchtower* of February 15, 2012.

20. What support do we have as Jehovah's servants?



"Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve."—JOSH. 24:15.

TRY TO ANSWER

How can you keep secular employment in its proper place?

How can you show balance in your approach to recreation and entertainment?

If a family member leaves Jehovah, how can you cope with your grief?

LET NOTHING DISTANCE YOU FROM JEHOVAH

"CHOOSE" is a powerful word. A person with a choice has options and a degree of control over the direction his or her life will take. To illustrate: Imagine that a man who is walking on a road suddenly finds that it becomes two diverging paths. Which will he choose to follow? If the man has a destination in mind, then one path will likely bring him closer to his goal while the other will take him farther away from it.

² The Bible contains numerous examples of people who faced a similar situation. For example, Cain had to decide whether to act on his anger or to control it. (Gen. 4:6, 7) Joshua had to choose between serving the true God or worshipping false gods. (Josh. 24:15) Joshua's goal was to stay close to Jehovah; hence, he chose a path that took him in that direction. Cain had no such goal, and he chose the path that took him farther away from Jehovah.

³ At times, we may face a fork-in-the-road decision. If that happens, keep in mind your destination, or goal—to bring glory to Jehovah in all that you do and to avoid anything that would cause you to draw away from him. (*Read Hebrews 3:12.*) In this article and in the next, we will examine seven areas of life in which we should let nothing distance us from Jehovah.

EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER

⁴ Christians are obligated to support themselves and their families. The Bible indicates that if anyone does not want to provide for his household, he is

1-3. (a) Why is Joshua a good example of one who made the right choice in life? (b) What should we keep in mind when faced with decisions?

4. Why is making a living important?

worse than an unbeliever. (2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8, ftn.) Clearly, secular employment is an important part of life, but if you are not careful, employment and career could distance you from Jehovah. How?

5 Suppose you are looking for a job. If you live in a land where work is scarce, you might be tempted to accept the first job offer—*any* offer—that comes along. What, though, if the nature of the work conflicts with Bible principles? What if the schedule or traveling involved will impede your Christian activity or take you away from your family? Should you accept the offer anyway, thinking that an unsuitable job is better than no job? Remember, choosing the wrong path could distance you from Jehovah. (Heb. 2:1) Whether you are looking for work or you are reevaluating your current employment, how can you make wise decisions?

6 As stated earlier, keep in mind your destination. Ask yourself, ‘Where do I want a job or career to take me?’ If you view secular work as a means to an end—to support yourself and your family in Jehovah’s service—Jehovah will bless your efforts. (Matt. 6:33) Jehovah is not stumped when you face a job loss or an unexpected economic downturn. (Isa. 59:1) He “knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial.”—2 Pet. 2:9.

7 On the other hand, what if your aim is merely to become wealthy? Perhaps you will succeed. Even if you do, however, remember that such “success” will come at a price—one that you cannot af-

5. What factors are important when we consider a job offer?

6, 7. (a) What goals might a person have with regard to secular work? (b) Which goal will bring you closer to Jehovah, and why?

ford. (*Read 1 Timothy 6:9, 10.*) Overemphasis on wealth and career will only distance you from Jehovah.

8 If you are a parent, think about how your example affects your children. What do they see as being most important to you—your career or your friendship with Jehovah? If they see that status, prestige, and wealth have first place in your life, might they follow you on such a disastrous path? Could they lose a measure of respect for you as a parent? One young Christian states: “As far back as I can remember, my father has been preoccupied with his job. At first, it seemed that he worked so hard because he wanted our family to have the very best. He wanted us to be well cared for. But in recent years, something has changed. He works and works, and then he brings home luxuries rather than necessities. As a result, we’re known as the family that has a lot of money rather than as the family that encourages others in spiritual pursuits. I would take my father’s spiritual support over his money any day.”

9 Parents, do not distance yourself from Jehovah by putting too much emphasis on your career. By your example, show your children that you truly believe that the greatest wealth we can possess is spiritual, not material.—Matt. 5:3.

10 If you are a young person who is contemplating a career, how can you choose the right path? As already discussed, you need to know where your life is headed. Would training and employment in the field that you are

8, 9. What should parents consider when it comes to their attitude toward secular work? Explain.

10. What might a young person consider when choosing a career?

considering allow you to pursue Kingdom interests more fully, or would it distance you from Jehovah? (2 Tim. 4:10) Is your goal to imitate the lifestyle of people whose happiness rises and falls depending on the size of their bank account or stock portfolio? Or will you choose to reflect the confidence of David, who wrote: "A young man I used to be, I have also grown old, and yet I have not seen anyone righteous left entirely, nor his offspring looking for bread"? (Ps. 37:25) Remember, one path will distance you from Jehovah, while the other path will lead you to the best life ever. (***Read Proverbs 10:22; Malachi 3:10.***) Which path will you choose?*

RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

11 The Bible is not anti-fun, nor does it depict recreation and entertainment as a waste of time. "Bodily training is beneficial for a little," wrote Paul to Tim-

* For more information on choosing a career, see chapter 38 of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 2.

11. What does the Bible acknowledge about recreation and entertainment, but what should we keep in mind?

othy. (1 Tim. 4:8) The Bible even says that there is "a time to laugh" and "a time to skip about," and it encourages a healthy amount of rest. (Eccl. 3:4; 4:6) If you are not careful, however, recreation and entertainment could distance you from Jehovah. How? Much of the danger centers on two aspects—what *type* you choose and how much *time* you spend on it.

12 First, consider the type. Be assured that you can find healthy forms of recreation and good entertainment. Admittedly, though, much of what is available glorifies things that God hates, including violence, spiritism, and illicit sex. Therefore, you need to scrutinize the type of recreation and entertainment that you engage in. What effect does it have on you? Does it encourage in you a spirit of violence, fierce competition, or nationalism? (Prov. 3:31) Does it drain your financial resources? Could it stumble others? (Rom. 14:21) What type of associates does your choice of recreation and entertainment bring you into con-

12. What factors should you consider with regard to the type of recreation and entertainment you choose?

Recreation of the right kind
and in the right amount is refreshing



tact with? (Prov. 13:20) Does it stimulate in you a desire to commit wrong acts? —Jas. 1:14, 15.

13 Consider, too, the amount of time you spend on recreation and entertainment. Ask yourself, ‘Do I spend so much time in leisure pursuits that I have little time left for spiritual activities?’ If you choose to spend excessive time on recreation and entertainment, you will find that your downtime is not as refreshing as it could be. In fact, those who keep relaxation in its place enjoy it even *more*. Why? Because they know that they first took care of “the more important things,” so their period of relaxation comes guilt free.—*Read Philippians 1:10, 11.*

14 Although spending much time in leisure activities may seem appealing, taking that path could distance you from Jehovah. A 20-year-old sister named Kim learned that from experience. “I used to be at all the parties,” she says. “Every weekend something big was happening—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Now, though, I see that there are just so many more important things to do. For example, as a pioneer, I wake up at 6:00 a.m. for field service, so I can’t be socializing until one or two in the morning. I know that social events are not all bad, but they can be a huge distraction. Like anything else, they have to be kept in their place.”

15 Parents are responsible for providing materially, spiritually, and emotionally for themselves and their children. That includes making provision for refreshment. If you are a parent, do not

13, 14. What do you need to consider with regard to how much time you spend in leisure activities?

15. How can parents help their children enjoy refreshing recreation?

be a killjoy who treats all leisure activity as bad. At the same time, be on guard against unsavory influences. (1 Cor. 5:6) With adequate forethought, you can find recreation and entertainment that is truly refreshing for your family.* In that way, you and your children will choose a path that will bring you closer to Jehovah.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

16 The bond between parent and child is so strong that Jehovah used that relationship to illustrate his own love for his people. (Isa. 49:15) It is normal, therefore, to be deeply grieved when a beloved family member leaves Jehovah. “I was devastated,” says one sister whose daughter was disfellowshipped. “I wondered, ‘Why did she leave Jehovah?’ I felt guilty, and I blamed myself.”

17 Jehovah understands your pain. He himself “felt hurt at his heart” when the first member of his human family, and later most people living before the Flood, rebelled. (Gen. 6:5, 6) It may be difficult for those who have never experienced such a loss to appreciate how devastating it can be. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to let the improper course of a disfellowshipped family member distance you from Jehovah. How, then, can you cope with the profound grief that arises when a family member leaves Jehovah?

18 Do not blame yourself for what happened. Jehovah has put a choice before humans, and each dedicated and

* For suggestions, see pages 17-19 of the November 2011 issue of *Awake!*

16, 17. What grievous situation has afflicted many parents, and how do we know that Jehovah understands their pain?

18. Why should parents not blame themselves if a child leaves Jehovah?



It is not wrong to hope that a loved one will return to Jehovah

baptized family member must “carry his own load” of responsibility. (Gal. 6:5) Ultimately, Jehovah holds the sinner—not you—responsible for his or her choice. (Ezek. 18:20) Also, do not blame others. Respect Jehovah’s arrangement for discipline. Take your stand against the Devil—not against shepherds who act to protect the congregation.—1 Pet. 5:8, 9.

19 On the other hand, if you choose the path of resentment toward Jehovah, you will distance yourself from him. Really, what your beloved family member needs to see is your resolute stance to put Jehovah above everything else—including the family bond. So to cope with the situation, be sure to maintain your own spirituality. Do not iso-

19, 20. (a) What can parents of disfellowshipped children do to cope with their grief? (b) What hope do such parents rightly entertain?

late yourself from your faithful Christian brothers and sisters. (Prov. 18:1) Pour out your feelings to Jehovah in prayer. (Ps. 62:7, 8) Do not look for excuses to associate with a disfellowshipped family member, for example, through e-mail. (1 Cor. 5:11) Stay absorbed in spiritual activities. (1 Cor. 15:58) The sister quoted above says, “I know that I must stay busy in Jehovah’s service and keep myself in a spiritually strong condition so that when my daughter does come back to Jehovah, I will be in a position to help her.”

20 The Bible says that love “hopes all things.” (1 Cor. 13:4, 7) It is not wrong for you to entertain the hope that your loved one will return. Each year, many wrongdoers repent and come back to Jehovah’s organization. Jehovah does not begrudge their repentance. On the contrary, he is “ready to forgive.”—Ps. 86:5.

MAKE WISE CHOICES

21 Jehovah has endowed his human creation with free will. (*Read Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.*) But with that freedom comes a sobering responsibility. Each Christian should ask himself: ‘Which path am I on? Have I allowed employment and career, recreation and entertainment, or family relationships to distance me from Jehovah?’

22 Jehovah’s love for his people never wavers. The only way we could become distanced from Jehovah is if we chose to follow a wrong path. (Rom. 8:38, 39) Yet, that does not have to happen! Make it your determination to allow nothing to distance you from Jehovah. The next article will discuss four more areas in which you can demonstrate that resolve.

21, 22. What is your resolve when it comes to your use of free will?



*“Draw close to God,
and he will draw close
to you.”*—JAS. 4:8.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

How can we maintain a proper view of technology and health?

How can we maintain a proper view of money and pride?

How can we stay close to Jehovah?

KEEP DRAWING CLOSE TO JEHOVAH

JEHOVAH GOD created humans with the need for drawing close to him. Yet, Satan wants us to think as he does—that we do not need Jehovah. That is a lie that Satan has promoted ever since Eve was deceived by it in the garden of Eden. (Gen. 3:4-6) Down through history, much of mankind has repeated that mistake.

² Happily, we do not need to fall into Satan’s trap. “We are not ignorant of his designs.” (2 Cor. 2:11) Satan tries to distance us from Jehovah by moving us to make wrong choices. But as the preceding article showed, we can make right choices regarding career, entertainment, and family concerns. This article will show how keeping technology, health, money, and pride in their proper place can help us to “draw close to God.”—Jas. 4:8.

TECHNOLOGY

³ Around the world, advanced electronic devices are now commonplace. Used properly, such inventions can be useful tools. Used improperly, they can come between us and our heavenly Father. Consider computers. The magazine you are reading was written and published with the aid of computers. A computer can be an effective research and communication tool and at times a source of refreshing entertainment. We can, however, also become obsessed with computer technology. Marketers cleverly convince people that they *must have* the latest products. One young man so passionately desired a particular tablet computer that he secretly sold one of his kidneys to buy it. What a shortsighted sacrifice!

1, 2. (a) What are Satan’s “designs”? (b) What will help us to draw close to God?

3. Illustrate how technology can be used for good or for bad.

4 It is even more tragic to sacrifice your intimacy with Jehovah through misuse or overuse of technology. “I know that the Bible says that we should ‘buy out the opportune time’ for spiritual matters,” says Jon, a Christian in his late 20’s.* “But when it comes to computers, I’m my own worst enemy.” Jon often found himself still online late into the night. “The more tired I was, the harder it was to quit chatting or watching short videos—and not always wholesome ones,” he relates. To help himself break this bad habit, Jon set his computer to shut itself down when it was time for him to go to bed.—*Read Ephesians 5: 15, 16.*

5 Parents, you need not control your children’s every move, but you do need

* Names have been changed.

4. How did one Christian deal with his excessive computer use?

5, 6. (a) What responsibilities do parents have toward their children? (b) How can parents make sure that their children have good association?

Parents, help your children to use technology wisely



to monitor their computer use. Do not abandon them to online immorality, violent games, spiritism, and bad association just to keep them busy and out of your way. If you do, they may conclude, ‘Since Dad and Mom don’t care, it must be all right.’ As parents, it is your job to shield your children—including teenagers—from anything that could distance them from Jehovah. Even animals protect their young from danger. Imagine what a mother bear would do if someone threatened her cubs!—Compare Hosea 13:8.

6 Help your children to arrange wholesome association with other exemplary Christians, young and old. And remember, your children need *you* to spend time with them! So *make* time to laugh, play, work, and “draw close to God” together.*

HEALTH

7 “How are you feeling?” This common expression betrays a grim reality. Because our first parents allowed Satan to distance them from Jehovah, we are all subject to illness. Sickness serves Satan’s purpose, for when we are sick, it is harder for us to serve Jehovah. And if we die, we cannot serve him at all. (Ps. 115: 17) Naturally, then, we want to do what we can to stay healthy.* And we should be concerned about our brothers’ health and welfare.

8 It is important, however, to avoid

* See “How to Raise Responsible Children” in the October 2011 issue of *Awake!*

* See “Five Keys to Better Health” in the March 2011 issue of *Awake!*

7. Why do we all want to stay healthy?

8, 9. (a) How can we avoid going to extremes in regard to health? (b) What are the benefits of cultivating joy?

going to extremes. Some have zealously promoted certain diets, treatments, or products—even more zealously than the good news of God’s Kingdom. They may sincerely believe that they are helping others. Even so, it is not appropriate to promote health or beauty products and practices before or after meetings at the Kingdom Hall or at assemblies or conventions. Why not?

9 We meet together to discuss spiritual matters and to increase our joy, a product of God’s holy spirit. (Gal. 5:22) On such occasions, offering health advice or products—solicited or unsolicited—can detract from our spiritual purpose and rob others of their joy. (Rom. 14:17) How a person addresses health concerns must be his or her own decision. Further, no one has a solution to all illness. Even the finest doctors get old and sick, and eventually they die. And worrying excessively about our health cannot extend our life. (Luke 12:25) On the other hand, “a heart that is joyful does good as a curer.”—Prov. 17:22.

10 Similarly, it is appropriate to be concerned about our appearance. But we need not try too hard to erase all signs of aging. Those signs can be evidence of maturity, dignity, and inner beauty. For example, the Bible says: “Gray-headedness is a crown of beauty when it is found in the way of righteousness.” (Prov. 16:31) That is how Jehovah views us, and we should try to view ourselves as he does. (*Read 1 Peter 3:3, 4.*) Is it wise, therefore, to risk unnecessary and potentially dangerous surgical procedures or medical treatments merely to make oneself more physically attrac-

10. (a) What qualities are beautiful to Jehovah? (b) How can we enjoy the best possible health?

tive? “The joy of Jehovah” is a source of true beauty that radiates from the inside, regardless of age or health. (Neh. 8:10) Only in the new world will we be completely healthy and regain youthful beauty. (Job 33:25; Isa. 33:24) Until then, showing practical wisdom and faith will help us to stay close to Jehovah while we make the best of our present circumstances.—1 Tim. 4:8.

MONEY

11 Money is not evil, nor is it wrong to engage in honest business. (Eccl. 7:12; Luke 19:12, 13) However, nurturing a “love of money” will unavoidably distance us from Jehovah. (1 Tim. 6:9, 10) “The anxiety of this system,” extreme concern about obtaining life’s necessities, can choke us spiritually. So can “the deceptive power of riches,” the mistaken belief that riches bring lasting happiness and security. (Matt. 13:22) Jesus made it clear that “*no one*” can successfully serve both God and riches.—Matt. 6:24.

12 The wrong view of money can lead to wrong actions. (Prov. 28:20) Promises of quick, easy money have enticed some to purchase lottery tickets or to pursue multilevel marketing schemes, even drawing in other members of the congregation. Others have been fooled by offers of unrealistically high returns on investments. Do not allow greed to cause you to be defrauded. Use good sense. If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is.

13 When we put first “the kingdom

11. How can money become a snare?

12. What sort of financial snares are common today, and how can we avoid them?

13. How does Jehovah’s view of money differ from the world’s?

and his righteousness," Jehovah blesses our balanced efforts to obtain life's necessities. (Matt. 6:33; Eph. 4:28) He does not want us to be falling asleep during meetings because of overwork or to be sitting in the Kingdom Hall worrying about money. Yet, many in the world around us believe that only by devoting themselves to making money can they have a secure future and take it easy later in life. They often push their children toward the same materialistic goal. Jesus showed that such thinking is unreasonable. (*Read Luke 12:15-21.*) This may remind us of Gehazi, who thought he could indulge his greed while still maintaining his good standing with Jehovah.—2 Ki. 5:20-27.

14 Certain eagles are reported to have drowned when they did not release from their talons a fish that was too heavy to carry off. Could something similar happen to a Christian? "I'm normally very thrifty," explains an elder named Alex. "If I pour out a little too much shampoo, I put some back in the bottle." Nevertheless, Alex got caught up in trading in the stock market, thinking he could soon quit his job and enter the pioneer service. He became ever more engrossed in studying various offerings and market reports. Using his savings and money borrowed from brokers, he bought stocks that analysts predicted would quickly rise in value. Instead, they dropped sharply. "I was determined to get my money back," Alex relates. "I felt that if I just held on, the stocks would come back up."

15 For months, Alex could think of little else. He found it difficult to focus on spiritual matters, and he lost sleep. But

14, 15. Why must we not look to the financial system for security? Give an example.

the stocks never rebounded. Alex lost his savings and had to sell his house. "I caused my family great pain," he admits. But he learned an important lesson. "I now know that anyone who puts his trust in Satan's system will be profoundly disappointed." (Prov. 11:28) Indeed, resting our hope on our savings, investments, or ability to earn money in this system amounts to resting our hope on "the god of this system," Satan. (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 6:17) Alex has since simplified his life "for the sake of the good news." He will tell you that doing so has made him and his family happier and has drawn them closer to Jehovah.—*Read Mark 10:29, 30.*

PRIDE

16 Taking pride in the right things can be good. For example, we should always feel proud to be Jehovah's Witnesses. (Jer. 9:24) A healthy measure of self-respect helps us to make good decisions and to avoid lowering our moral standards. But placing too high a value on our own views or position can distance us from Jehovah.—Ps. 138:6; Rom. 12:3.

17 The Bible contains examples of proud people as well as of humble people. King David humbly looked to Jehovah for guidance, and Jehovah blessed him. (Ps. 131:1-3) But Jehovah humbled proud Kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. (Dan. 4:30-37; 5:22-30) Today, too, situations arise that test our humility. Ryan, a 32-year-old ministerial servant, relocated to a new congregation. "I expected to be recommended

16. How does pride that is good differ from pride that is bad?

17, 18. (a) Cite Bible examples of humble people as well as of proud people. (b) How did one brother avoid letting pride distance him from Jehovah?

as an elder soon," Ryan relates, "but a year went by without that happening." Would Ryan become angry or bitter, feeling that the elders had failed to show him due respect? Would he stop attending meetings, letting pride distance him from Jehovah and His people? What would you have done?

18 "I read everything I could find in our publications on postponed expectation," Ryan recalls. (Prov. 13:12) "I began to realize that I needed to learn patience and humility. I needed to let Jehovah train me." Ryan directed his attention away from himself and toward serving others—in the congregation and in the field. Soon he was conducting several progressive Bible studies. "When I was appointed as an elder a year and a half later, it came as a surprise," he says. "I had stopped worrying about it because I was enjoying my ministry so much."—*Read Psalm 37:3, 4.*

STAY CLOSE TO JEHOVAH!

19 All the matters discussed in this article and the preceding one have a proper place in our lives. We take pride in being Jehovah's servants. A happy family and good health are among Jehovah's greatest gifts. We understand that secular work and money can help us to care for our needs. We know that recreation can refresh us and that technology can be useful. But pursuing any of these things at the wrong time, to an extreme degree, or in a way that interferes with our worship could distance us from Jehovah.

20 Satan, of course, would like that to happen. Still, you can prevent such a ca-

19, 20. (a) How can we make sure that none of our daily pursuits will distance us from Jehovah? (b) What examples can we imitate of those who stayed close to Jehovah?

lamity from befalling you and your family! (Prov. 22:3) Draw close to Jehovah, and stay close to him. We have many Bible examples to instruct us in this regard. Enoch and Noah "walked with the true God." (Gen. 5:22; 6:9) Moses

Let nothing distance you from Jehovah!

"continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27) Jesus had God's constant support because he always did what was pleasing to his heavenly Father. (John 8:29) Imitate such examples. "Always be rejoicing. Pray incessantly. In connection with everything give thanks." (1 Thess. 5:16-18) And let nothing distance you from Jehovah!

Instead of longing for a position in the congregation, enjoy your work in the ministry!





"Forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead."—PHIL. 3:13.

ISOLATE THESE MAIN POINTS:

What helped the apostle Paul to overcome his regrettable past?

What is the divine formula for acquiring peace of mind?

What principle can help us to serve God without regrets?

SERVING WITHOUT REGRETS

A POET wrote: “Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: ‘It might have been!’” The poet was J. G. Whittier, and he was referring to things that we regret, that we wish we could do over and do differently. “Regret” is mental sorrow, pain of mind, at something done or perhaps left undone, and it can mean “to weep again.” We all have done things we wish we could go back and do differently. What regrets do you have?

² Some people have made grievous mistakes in their lives, even committing serious sins. Others have not done anything so bad, but they wonder whether some of their choices in life were really the best. Some people have been able to overcome the past and continue on with their lives. Others are continually plagued with “if onlys” about their past. (Ps. 51:3) Which are you? Do you wish that you could serve God without regrets—at least from this day forward? Is there a true-life example from whom we can learn to do that? There certainly is—the apostle Paul.

³ During his life, Paul made both terrible mistakes and wise choices. He felt deeply about the regrets of his past, but he also learned to make a success of his life in faithful service to God. Let us see what his example can teach us about serving without regrets.

PAUL'S REGRETTABLE PAST

⁴ As a young Pharisee, Paul did things that he later regretted. For example, he led a campaign of vicious persecution against Christ’s disciples. The Bible record states that immediately after the martyring of Stephen, “Saul [later known as Paul] . . . began to deal outrageously with the congregation. Invad-

1-3. (a) What are regrets, and how may they affect us? (b) From Paul, what can we learn about serving God without regrets?

4. What regrettable past did the apostle Paul have?

ing one house after another and, dragging out both men and women, he would turn them over to prison." (Acts 8:3) Scholar Albert Barnes said that the Greek word rendered "to deal outrageously with" is "a strong expression, denoting the zeal and fury with which [Saul] engaged in persecution." Hence, said Barnes, "Saul raged against the church like a wild beast." As a devout Jew, Saul believed that it was his God-given duty to stamp out Christianity. So he pursued the Christians with brutal cruelty, "breathing threat and murder against . . . both men and women," trying to destroy them.—Acts 9:1, 2; 22:4.*

5 It was Saul's intent to go to Damascus, tear Jesus' disciples from their homes, and drag them to Jerusalem to face the wrath of the Sanhedrin. However, he failed because he was in conflict with the Head of the Christian congregation. (Eph. 5:23) While Saul was on his way to Damascus, Jesus confronted him, and Saul was blinded by a miraculous light. Then Jesus sent Saul on to Damascus to wait for further contact. We know the rest of what happened.—Acts 9:3-22.

6 Paul's values changed as soon as he became a Christian. Instead of being a fierce enemy of Christianity, he became an ardent advocate of it. Even so, he later wrote of himself: "You, of course, heard about my conduct formerly in Judaism, that to the point of excess I kept on per-

* The repeated reference to women also being the object of Saul's persecution shows that they played a large part in the spread of Christianity in the first century, just as they do today.—Ps. 68:11.

5. Explain how Saul was converted from persecuting Jesus' followers to preaching about Christ.

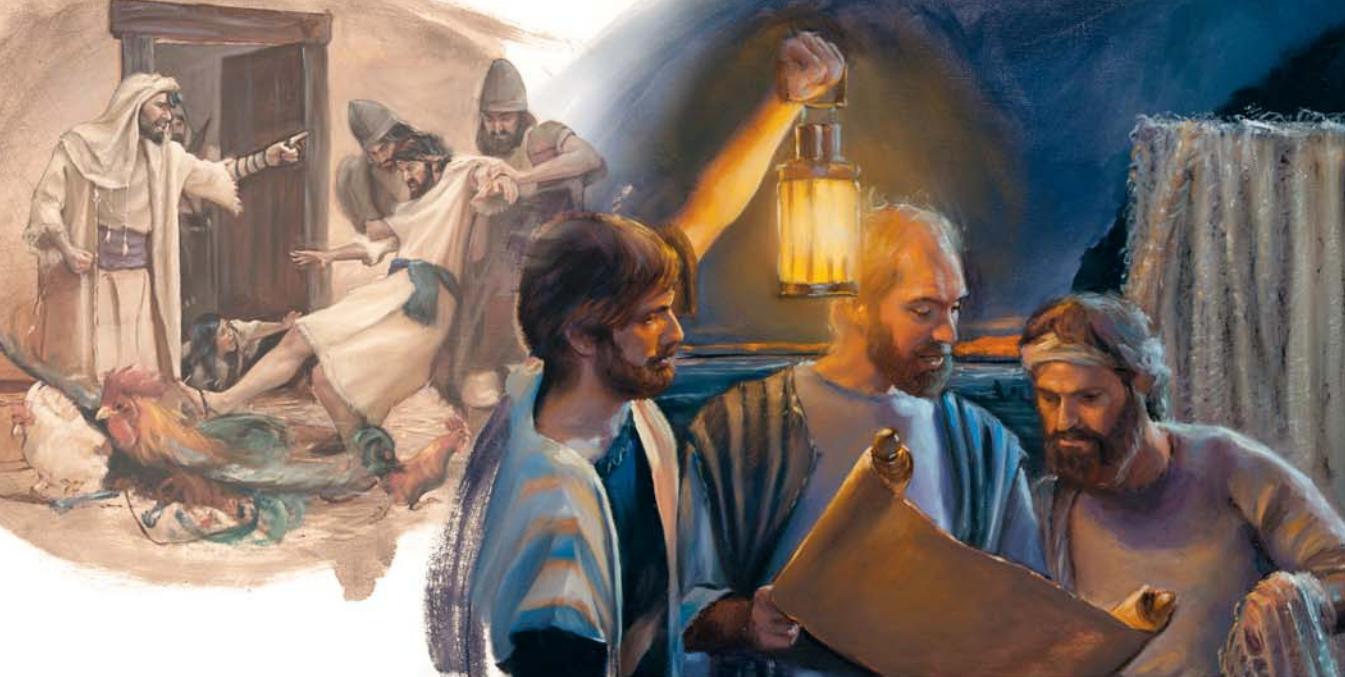
6, 7. What shows that Paul was well-aware of his painful past?

secuting the congregation of God and devastating it." (Gal. 1:13) Later, he again mentioned his regrettable past when writing to the Corinthians, to the Philippians, and to Timothy. (*Read 1 Corinthians 15:9*; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13) Paul was not proud of having to write such things about himself, but neither did he try to act as though none of that had ever happened. He was well-aware that he had made serious mistakes.—Acts 26:9-11.

7 Bible scholar Frederic W. Farrar referred to the part that Saul had played "in the horrid work of persecution." Farrar added that it is only when we weigh the terrible significance of this sad period in Paul's life that "we feel the load of remorse which must have lain upon him, and the taunts to which he was liable from malignant enemies." At times, Paul was perhaps approached by brothers in the various congregations he visited, brothers meeting him for the first time, saying, 'So you're Paul—you're the one who persecuted us!'—Acts 9:21.

8 Paul realized, however, that it was only by God's undeserved kindness that he was able to carry out his ministry. He mentions that merciful quality of God some 90 times in his 14 letters—more than any other Bible writer. (*Read 1 Corinthians 15:10*) Paul deeply appreciated the merciful way in which he was treated, and he wanted to make sure that God's undeserved kindness had not been extended to him in vain. So he "labored in excess" of all the other apostles. Paul's example clearly shows that if we confess our sins and change our course, Jehovah is willing to blot out even grievous sins on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. What a good lesson this is

8. How did Paul feel about the mercy and love that Jehovah and Jesus displayed toward him, and what lesson does that teach us?



Paul learned how to serve without regrets

for any who find it hard to believe that the benefits of Christ's sacrifice could be meant for them personally! (*Read 1 Timothy 1:15, 16.*) Even though Paul had been a rabid persecutor of Christ, he could write: "The Son of God . . . loved me and handed himself over for me." (Gal. 2:20; Acts 9:5) Yes, Paul learned the principle of how to serve without amassing more regrets. Is that something that you have learned?

DO YOU HAVE ANY REGRETS?

9 Have you done things that you now regret? Have you ever wasted valuable energy and time on the wrong pursuits? Did you act in some way that resulted in harm to others? Or it may be that you have unpleasant feelings of regret for some other reason. The question is, What can you do about it?

9, 10. (a) Why do some of Jehovah's people have regrets? (b) What is wrong with continually worrying about the past?

10 Many people worry! To worry continually means to plague oneself, vex oneself, persecute oneself. It causes great anxiety. Does worrying solve any problems? Not one! Imagine trying to move forward by rocking for hours in a rocking chair, expending all that energy but getting nowhere! Instead of worrying, some positive action on your part may produce good results. You can apologize to the person you wronged, perhaps restoring good relations. You can avoid whatever led up to the wrong act, thereby preventing future problems. Then again, you may simply have to live through some situations of life. But worry is nothing but a form of paralysis that can leave one unable to serve God fully. And there is no reward for worry!

11 Some have the tendency to let past

11. (a) How may we receive Jehovah's mercy and loving-kindness? (b) What is the divine formula for acquiring peace of mind about our past failings?

IN WHAT SENSE HAS JEHOVAH FELT REGRET?

On a number of occasions, the Bible mentions that Jehovah “felt regret.” (Jonah 3:10; Gen. 6:6, 7; Judg. 2:18; 1 Sam. 15:11) Since God’s activity is perfect, his regret is never because of a mistake on

his part. (Num. 23:19; Deut. 32:4) Rather, in Hebrew, to feel regret can mean to change one’s mind or intention. For example, because Jehovah is reasonable, adaptable, and merciful, he is

willing to alter his intended actions toward erring ones in response to their repentance and the changes that they make.
—Jer. 18:7-10.

failings overwhelm them to the point that they feel that they are unworthy in God’s eyes. They may feel beyond the reach of God’s mercy because they strayed off course either so far or so often. The fact is, though, that no matter what they may have done in the past, they can repent, change, and ask for forgiveness. (Acts 3:19) Jehovah’s mercy and loving-kindness can be extended to them, even as it has been to so many others. Jehovah will look kindly upon a humble, honest one and upon his heartfelt repentance. God did that for Job, who said: “I do repent [“feel regret,” ftn.] in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:6) We all must follow the divine formula for acquiring peace of mind: “He that is covering over his transgressions will not succeed, but he that is confessing and leaving them will be shown mercy.” (Prov. 28:13; Jas. 5:14-16) Thus, we can confess to God, pray for his forgiveness, and take steps to right the wrong. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) If we have done these things, then we can enjoy the mercy of the One who ‘forgives in a large way.’—Isa. 55:7.

12 There is power in prayer; it accomplishes much with God. David ex-

12. (a) What does David’s example teach us about the best way to deal with a guilty conscience? (b) In what sense has Jehovah felt regret, and how does knowing that help us? (See the box.)

pressed his deep feelings in a prayer of faith that is beautifully preserved in the Psalms. (*Read Psalm 32:1-5.*) As David admitted, trying to repress a guilty conscience wore him out! He apparently suffered ill effects mentally and physically and lost joy because of his failure to confess. What brought David pardon and relief? Only a confession to God. Jehovah answered David’s prayers and strengthened him to go ahead with his life and accomplish something worthwhile. Similarly, if you pray sincerely from the heart, you can be confident that Jehovah will give his keen attention to your supplication. If past wrongs trouble you, rectify them to the extent that you can and then believe Jehovah’s assurance that he has forgiven you!—Ps. 86:5.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

13 It has been said that life can be understood by looking back but that it must be lived by looking ahead. So instead of worrying about the past, we should be concerned about the present and the future. What are we doing right now, or failing to do, that years from now we will wish we had not done or had done differently? Are we maintaining a course of faithfulness that will

13, 14. (a) What should be our chief concern now? (b) What questions can move us to analyze our present situation in life?

prevent any possible regrets at a future time?

14 As the great tribulation nears, we do not want to be plagued with such anxious thoughts as these: ‘Could I have done more in God’s service? Why didn’t I pioneer when I had the opportunity? What prevented me from reaching out to serve as a ministerial servant? Did I make a real effort to put on the new personality? Am I the sort of person Jehovah wants in his new world?’ Instead of just worrying about such sobering questions, we want to use them to analyze ourselves and make sure that we are giving our best in Jehovah’s service. Otherwise, we could be continuing in a way of life that may result in even more regrets.

—2 Tim. 2:15.

NEVER REGRET YOUR SACRED SERVICE

15 What about those of you who have made sacrifices to serve Jehovah full-time? Perhaps you gave up a promising career or a successful business to simplify your life and have more time for Kingdom pursuits. Or perhaps you remained unmarried or if married, decided to forgo having children to make yourself available for an avenue of full-time service that otherwise would not have been possible for you—Bethel service, international construction work, circuit work, or missionary service. Should you regret those decisions now as you grow older in Jehovah’s service? Should you feel that the sacrifices you made were unnecessary or ill-timed? Not at all!

15, 16. (a) What sacrifices have many made to put God’s service first in their life? (b) Why should we not regret any sacrifice we have made in putting Kingdom pursuits first?

16 You made those decisions on the basis of your deep love for Jehovah and an earnest desire to help others who wanted to serve him. You need not think that you would have been better off had you lived your life differently. You can have the deep satisfaction of knowing that you did what you knew to be right in your case. You can rejoice in having done your very best to serve Jehovah. He will not forget your life of self-sacrifice. In the real life yet to come, he will reward you with blessings far better than any you can now imagine!

—Ps. 145:16; 1 Tim. 6:19.

HOW TO SERVE WITHOUT REGRETS

17 What principle did Paul learn that helped him serve God without having more regrets? As rendered in the J. B. Phillips translation, Paul wrote: “I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal.” (*Read Philippians 3:13, 14.*) Paul did not dwell on the wrong course he had pursued in Judaism. Instead, he concentrated all his energies on qualifying himself for the future prize of eternal life.

18 All of us can apply the principle behind Paul’s words. Rather than fretting over our past, dwelling on what cannot be undone, we should stretch forward to what lies ahead. No, we may not literally forget past mistakes, but we need not constantly berate ourselves for them. We can strive to put the past behind us, serve God to the best of our ability now, and look ahead to the glorious future!

17, 18. (a) What principle helped Paul to serve without regrets? (b) What is your resolve regarding your past, present, and future service to Jehovah?



*"We are fellow workers
for your joy."*

—2 COR. 1:24.

LOOK FOR THE ANSWERS:

How did Paul demonstrate that he was not a ‘master over his brothers’ faith’ but a ‘fellow worker for their joy’?

In what ways do Christian elders contribute to the joy of their fellow believers?

How might all of us add to the spirit of joy in the congregation?

CHRISTIAN ELDERS 'FELLOW WORKERS FOR OUR JOY'

IT WAS the year 55 C.E. The apostle Paul was in the harbor city of Troas, but he could not stop thinking about Corinth. Earlier that year, it had pained him to learn that the brothers there quarreled among themselves. So out of fatherly concern, he had sent a letter to correct them. (1 Cor. 1:11; 4:15) He had also sent his fellow worker Titus to them and had arranged for Titus to report back to him in Troas. Now Paul was waiting for Titus in Troas, longing to hear how the Corinthians were faring. But to Paul’s deep disappointment, Titus did not arrive. What could Paul do? He sailed to Macedonia, and to his joy, there they met. Titus related that the brothers in Corinth had responded well to Paul’s letter and that they were yearning to see him. When Paul heard that good report, he “rejoiced yet more.”—2 Cor. 2:12, 13; 7:5-9.

2 Shortly thereafter, Paul wrote the Corinthians a second letter. He told them: “Not that we are the masters over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy, for it is by your faith that you are standing.” (2 Cor. 1:24) What did Paul mean by that? And how should those words affect Christian elders today?

OUR FAITH AND OUR JOY

3 Paul mentioned two vital aspects of our worship —faith and joy. Recall that regarding faith, he wrote: “Not that we are the masters over your faith, . . .

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1. What caused Paul to rejoice over the Christians in Corinth?
 2. (a) What did Paul write to the Corinthians about faith and joy? (b) What questions will we consider?
 3. (a) What did Paul mean when he wrote: “By your faith . . . you are standing”? (b) How do elders today follow Paul’s example?

for it is by your faith that you are standing." With these words, Paul acknowledged that the brothers in Corinth stood firm, not because of him or any other human, but because of their own faith in God. Hence, Paul saw no need to control the faith of his brothers, and he had no desire to do so. He was confident that they were faithful Christians who wanted to do what was right. (2 Cor. 2:3) Today, elders follow Paul's example by expressing confidence in their brothers' faith and motives for serving God. (2 Thess. 3:4) Rather than making rigid rules for the congregation, elders rely on Scriptural principles and direction from Jehovah's organization. After all, present-day elders are not the masters over their brothers' faith.—1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

⁴ Paul also stated: "We are fellow workers for your joy." With that expression, he referred to himself and his close associates. Why do we draw that conclusion? Well, in the same letter, Paul reminded the Corinthians of two of these associates when he wrote: "Jesus . . . was preached among you through us, that is, through me and Silvanus and Timothy." (2 Cor. 1:19) Moreover, whenever Paul used the term "fellow workers" in his letters, it always referred to his close associates, such as Apollos, Aquila, Prisca, Timothy, Titus, and others. (Rom. 16:3, 21; 1 Cor. 3:6-9; 2 Cor. 8:23) Hence, by saying: "We are fellow workers for your joy," Paul assured the Corinthians that he and his companions wanted to do all they could to promote the joy of all members of the congregation. Today, Christian elders have the same desire. They want to do all they can to help their

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4. (a) What did Paul mean when he wrote: "We are fellow workers for your joy"? (b) How do elders today imitate Paul's attitude?

brothers to "serve Jehovah with rejoicing."—Ps. 100:2; Phil. 1:25.

⁵ Recently, a group of zealous brothers and sisters living in different parts of the world were invited to respond to the question, "What words and deeds of an elder have added to your joy?" As we now consider the observations made by that group of fellow believers, see how their comments compare with how you might have responded. Furthermore, let all of us reflect on how we may contribute to a spirit of joy in our local congregation.*

"GREET PERSIS OUR BELOVED ONE"

⁶ Many of our brothers and sisters say that their joy is enhanced when elders show personal interest in them. One basic way in which elders do so is by following the example set by David, Elihu, and Jesus himself. (*Read 2 Samuel 9:6; Job 33:1; Luke 19:5.*) Each of these servants of Jehovah showed sincere interest in another person by using the individual's name. Paul too appreciated the importance of remembering and using the names of fellow believers. He concluded one of his letters by greeting more than 25 brothers and sisters by name, including Persis, a Christian sister about whom Paul said: "Greet Persis our beloved one."—Rom. 16:3-15.

⁷ Some elders have a hard time re-

* The same brothers and sisters were also asked, "Which quality do you value the most in an elder?" The overwhelming majority of them answered, "Being approachable." That important quality will be considered in an upcoming issue of this journal.

5. We will consider the responses to what question, and on what should we reflect?

6, 7. (a) What is one way in which elders can imitate Jesus, Paul, and other servants of God? (b) Why does remembering our brothers' names add to their joy?

remembering names. Still, when they make a real effort to do so, they are, in effect, telling their fellow believers, ‘You are important to me.’ (Ex. 33:17) Elders will particularly add to their brothers’ joy when they remember their names as they call on them for comments during the *Watchtower* Study or other meetings. —Compare John 10:3.

“SHE PERFORMED MANY LABORS IN THE LORD”

⁸ Paul also showed his interest in others by giving sincere commendation, which is another basic way to enhance the joy of fellow believers. Thus, in the same letter in which he stated his desire to work for his brothers’ joy, Paul wrote: “I have great boasting in regard to you.” (2 Cor. 7:4) Those words of commendation must have warmed the heart of the brothers in Corinth. Paul expressed similar sentiments to other congregations. (Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:3-5; 1 Thess. 1:8) In fact, after he mentioned Persis in his letter to the congregation in Rome, Paul added: “She performed many labors in the Lord.” (Rom. 16:12) How heartening that compliment must have been for that faithful sister! In commanding others, Paul followed the example set by both Jehovah and Jesus.—*Read Mark 1:9-11; John 1:47; Rev. 2:2, 13, 19.*

⁹ Elders today also see the importance of putting their feelings of appreciation for their brothers into words. (Prov. 3:27; 15:23) Whenever an elder does that, he tells his brothers, in effect: ‘I noticed what you did. I care about you.’ And fellow believers definitely need to hear

8. What was one important way in which Paul followed the example set by Jehovah and Jesus?

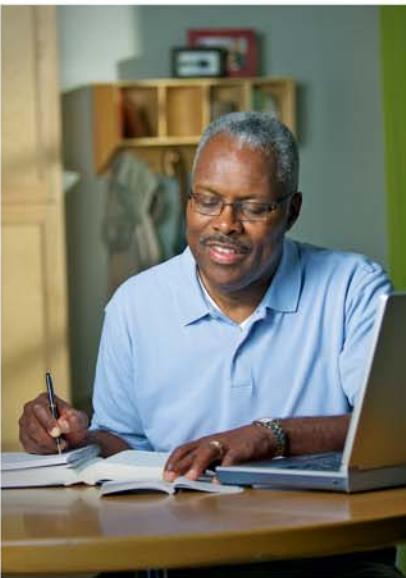
9. Why does giving and receiving commendation add to a spirit of joy in the congregation?

the elders’ reassuring words. A sister in her mid-50’s spoke for many when she said: “At work I seldom get a compliment. There’s a cold and competitive climate. So when an elder commends me for something I’ve done for the congregation, it’s so refreshing, so energizing! It makes me feel loved by my heavenly Father.” A brother who as a single parent is raising two children felt similarly. An elder recently gave him heartfelt commendation. How did it affect our brother? He says: “The elder’s words gave me a real boost!” Indeed, by sincerely commanding fellow believers, an elder lifts their spirit and deepens their joy. That, in turn, will give them added strength to keep on walking on the road to life “and not tire out.”—Isa. 40:31.

“SHEPHERD THE CONGREGATION OF GOD”

¹⁰ What is an especially vital way in which elders show personal interest in their brothers and add to the congregation’s joy? By taking the initiative to reach out to those who need encouragement. (*Read Acts 20:28.*) When elders do so, they imitate spiritual shepherds of old. Note, for instance, what the faithful overseer Nehemiah did when he saw that some of his Jewish brothers had grown spiritually weak. The account states that he immediately rose up and encouraged them. (Neh. 4:14) Today, elders want to do the same. They ‘rise up’—take the initiative—to help fellow believers to be firm in faith. To give such personal encouragement, they visit their brothers and sisters in their homes if circumstances allow. During such

10, 11. (a) How can elders follow the example set by Nehemiah? (b) What will help an elder to impart a spiritual gift when making shepherding calls?



Preparation helps an elder to ‘impart a spiritual gift’ on a shepherding visit

shepherding visits, they want to “impart some spiritual gift” to them. (Rom. 1:11) What will help elders to do so?

11 Prior to making a shepherding visit, an elder needs to take some time to think about the individual he will visit. What are the person’s challenges? What thoughts could build him or her up? What scripture or experience of a Bible character would be applicable to his or her circumstances? Such forethought will help an elder to have a conversation that will be meaningful, not trivial. During shepherding visits, an elder allows his brothers and sisters to express themselves while he listens attentively. (Jas. 1:19) One sister said: “It’s so comforting when an elder listens with his heart.” —Luke 8:18.

12 Who will benefit from receiving shepherding visits? Paul admonished his fellow Christian elders to “pay at-

tention . . . to *all* the flock.” Indeed, *all* members of the congregation need to receive encouragement, including those publishers and pioneers who have faithfully been carrying out their ministry year after year. Why do they need the support of spiritual shepherds? Because sometimes such spiritually strong ones too are nearly overwhelmed by the pressures exerted by this wicked world. To illustrate why even a strong servant of God may, at times, need help from a companion, let us consider an event in King David’s life.

“ABISHAI . . . CAME TO HIS HELP”

13 Shortly after young David had been anointed as king, he stood face-to-face with Goliath, one of the Rephaim, a race of giants. Courageous David killed the giant. (1 Sam. 17:4, 48-51; 1 Chron. 20: 5, 8) Years later, during a battle with

13. (a) Ishbi-benob exploited what condition of David? (b) How was Abishai able to come to David’s rescue?

12. Who in the congregation are in need of encouragement, and why?

the Philistines, David again stood face-to-face with a giant. His name was Ishbi-benob, also one of the Rephaim. (2 Sam. 21:16; ftn.) This time, however, the giant nearly killed David. Why? Not because David had lost his courage but because he had lost his strength. The record states: "David grew tired." As soon as Ishbi-benob noticed David's moment of physical weakness, he "got to think of striking David down." But then, just before the giant thrust his weapon into David, "at once, Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his [David's] help and struck the Philistine down and put him to death." (2 Sam. 21:15-17) What a narrow escape! How grateful David must have been that Abishai had kept an eye on him and had quickly come to his aid when his life was in danger! What lessons can we draw from this account?

14 Worldwide, we as Jehovah's people are carrying out our ministry despite the obstacles that Satan and his agents place in our path. Some of us have stood face-to-face with giant challenges, but with full reliance on Jehovah, we took on those "Goliaths" and conquered them. However, at times, the constant battle against the pressures of this world leaves us tired and discouraged. In that weakened condition, we are vulnerable and in danger of being 'struck down' by pressures we otherwise would have dealt with successfully. At such moments, the timely support given by an elder can help us to regain our joy and our strength, as many have experienced. A pioneer in her mid-60's related: "Some time ago, I did not feel well, and field service tired me out. An elder noticed

14. (a) How are we able to conquer Goliathlike challenges? (b) How can elders help others regain their strength and joy? Give an example.

my lack of energy and approached me. We had an encouraging conversation based on a Bible passage. I applied the suggestions he gave me, and I benefited." She added: "How loving of that elder to take note of my weak condition and to give me help!" Yes, it is heartening to know that we have elders who keep a loving eye on us and who, much like Abishai of old, stand ready to 'come to our help.'

"KNOW THE LOVE THAT I HAVE . . . FOR YOU"

15 Being a shepherd involves hard work. At times, elders spend sleepless nights in prayerful concern for God's flock or in giving spiritual support to fellow believers. (2 Cor. 11:27, 28) Still, elders carry out their responsibility fully and gladly, just as Paul did. He wrote to the Corinthians: "I will most gladly spend and be completely spent for your souls." (2 Cor. 12:15) Indeed, out of love for his brothers, Paul fully spent himself in strengthening them. (*Read 2 Corinthians 2:4; Phil. 2:17; 1 Thess. 2:8*) No wonder the brothers dearly loved Paul! —Acts 20:31-38.

16 We as God's servants today also love our caring Christian elders and thank Jehovah in our personal prayers for providing them. They add to our joy by showing personal interest in us. We feel enriched by their shepherding visits. Moreover, we are grateful that they stand ready to come to our aid at moments when we feel overwhelmed by the pressures of this world. Yes, such attentive Christian elders truly are 'fellow workers for our joy.'

15, 16. (a) Why was Paul dearly loved by his fellow believers? (b) Why do we love our caring congregation elders?



A Well-Planned Campaign Bears Fruit

María Isabel is a zealous young publisher in the city of San Bernardo in the South American country of Chile. She and her family are members of the indigenous Mapuche people. The entire family has been enthusiastically supporting efforts to form a new congregation in the Mapuche language, which is also called Mapudungun.

When it was announced that the Memorial of Christ's death would also be held in Mapudungun and that 2,000 printed Memorial invitations in that language were available for distribution, it made María Isabel think. What could she do to help? She recalled experiences of other Witness youths who had enjoyed success while preaching to classmates and teachers. She spoke with her parents about it, and together they decided that María Isabel would try to think of a plan to distribute the invitations at school. What plan did she come up with?

First, María Isabel asked the school authorities for permission to post an invitation right at the school's main entrance. They granted her request and praised her for her initiative. One day at morning roll call, the school principal even made an announcement over the loudspeaker about the invitation!

Then, María Isabel asked to visit all the classrooms. After obtaining permission from the teachers, she asked each class of students if any of them were Mapuche. "I thought that there would

be perhaps 10 or 15 students from Mapuche families in the whole school," she says, "but there were many more—I ended up giving out 150 invitations!"

"SHE WAS EXPECTING SOMEONE OLDER"

One woman who saw the poster with the invitation at the school entrance asked whom she should speak to regarding the event. Imagine her surprise when she was directed to a ten-year-old girl! "She was expecting someone older," María Isabel says with a grin. After giving her an invitation and a brief explanation, María Isabel asked the woman for her address so that she and her parents could visit her to tell her more about God's Kingdom. How delighted the 20 publishers serving in the Mapudungun-language field were to see that woman along with 26 other interested ones of the Mapuche people present at the Memorial. That group is now a thriving congregation!

Whatever your age, could you take similar initiative to invite fellow students or coworkers to the Memorial, a public talk, or a district convention? Why not do research in our publications to find experiences that may give you ideas on how to make such a project a success? Also, pray for Jehovah's holy spirit to help you to muster up courage to speak about him. (Luke 11:13) If you do so, you too may be pleasantly surprised and much encouraged by the results of your well-planned effort.