



# THE WATCHTOWER

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ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## STUDY EDITION

STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE WEEKS OF:

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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## PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

### **Study Articles 1, 2** PAGES 3-11

These articles examine in subject order all the verses of Romans chapter 12. We will consider what it means to "be aglow with the spirit" and to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. We will also learn how we can be peacemakers at home and within the congregation and in what ways we can conquer evil with good.

### **Study Articles 3, 4** PAGES 13-21

What does it mean to be a good friend? These articles will help us to see how Jesus set the pattern in this regard and how the first-century Christians followed his example. They will explain, too, why it is helpful for us to form strong, upbuilding friendships today and how we can do so.

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

### **Questions From Readers**

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# "BE AGLOW WITH THE SPIRIT"

*"Do not loiter at your business. Be aglow with the spirit. Slave for Jehovah."*—ROM. 12:11.

JEHOVAH appreciates willing sacrifices made by his servants to express their love for him and their submission to his will. In ancient times, he accepted various animal sacrifices and other offerings. These were made according to the Mosaic Law by Israelites seeking to obtain forgiveness for sins and to express thanksgiving. In the Christian congregation, Jehovah does not require us to offer such formal, material sacrifices. However, in chapter 12 of his letter to Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul shows that we are still expected to offer sacrifices. Let us see how.

## A Living Sacrifice

<sup>2</sup> Read *Romans 12:1, 2*. In the earlier part of his letter, Paul clearly demonstrated that anointed Christians, whether Jewish or Gentile, were declared righteous before God by faith, not by works. (*Rom. 1:16; 3:20-24*) In chapter 12, Paul explains that Christians should show their gratitude by a life of self-sacrifice. To that end, we have to make our minds over. Through inherited imperfection, we are subject to "the law of sin and of death." (*Rom. 8:2*) We, therefore, need to be transformed, "be made new in the force actuating [our] mind," by radically changing our inclinations. (*Eph. 4:23*) Such a complete change can be brought about only with the help of God and his spirit. It also requires serious effort on our part, using our

1. Why did the Israelites make animal sacrifices and other offerings?
2. As Christians, what kind of life do we lead, and what does this involve?

"power of reason." It means that we do our utmost not to be "fashioned after this system of things" with its corrupt morals, debased entertainment, and warped thinking. —Eph. 2:1-3.

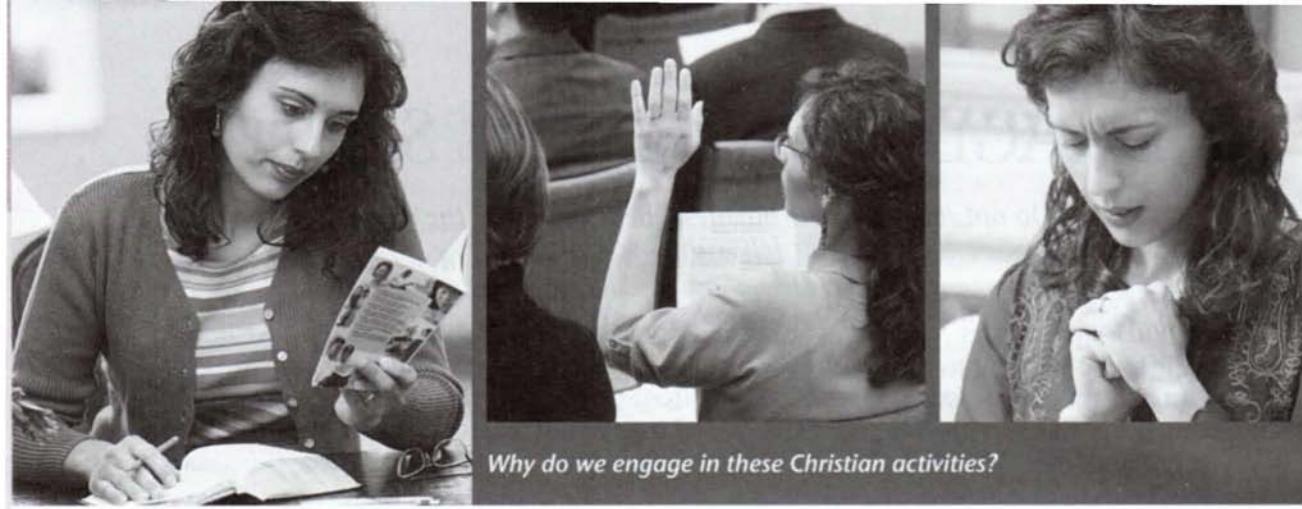
<sup>3</sup> Paul also invites us to use our "power of reason" to prove to ourselves what is "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Why do we read the Bible daily, meditate on what we read, pray, attend Christian meetings, and share in preaching the good news of the Kingdom? Is it because the congregation elders exhort us to do so? True, we are thankful for the helpful reminders of the elders. But we engage in Christian activities because we are moved by God's spirit to demonstrate our heartfelt love for Jehovah. Furthermore, we are personally *convinced* that carrying out such activities is God's will for us. (*Zech. 4:6; Eph. 5:10*) It brings us much joy and satisfaction to realize that by leading a truly Christian life, we can be acceptable to God.

## Varied Gifts

<sup>4</sup> Read *Romans 12:6-8, 11*. Paul explains that "we have gifts differing according to the undeserved kindness given to us." Some of the gifts Paul mentions—exhorting, presiding—especially concern Christian elders, who are admonished to preside "in real earnest."

<sup>5</sup> That same earnestness should be evident, states Paul, in the way overseers serve as teachers and carry out "a ministry." The

3. Why do we engage in Christian activities?
4. 5. How should Christian elders use their gifts?



*Why do we engage in these Christian activities?*

context seems to indicate that Paul here refers to "a ministry" carried out within the congregation, or the "one body." (Rom. 12: 4, 5) That ministry is similar to the one mentioned at Acts 6:4, where the apostles declare: "We shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." What does such a ministry involve? Christian elders use their gifts to build up the members of the congregation. They show themselves to "be at this ministry" when they earnestly provide guidance and instruction to the congregation from God's Word by their prayerful study, research, teaching, and shepherding. Overseers should use their gifts conscientiously and care for the sheep "with cheerfulness."—Rom. 12:7, 8; 1 Pet. 5:1-3.

<sup>6</sup> Paul further states: "Do not loiter at your business. Be aglow with the spirit. Slave for Jehovah." If we detect a tendency to be sluggish in our ministry, we may need to revise our study habits and to pray more intensely and more often for Jehovah's spirit, which can help us to combat any lukewarmness and to renew our zeal. (Luke 11:9, 13; Rev. 2:4; 3:14, 15, 19) The holy spirit energized the early Christians to speak about "the magnificent things of God." (Acts 2:4, 11)

6. How can we follow the counsel given at Romans 12:11, the theme text of this article?

Likewise, it can move us to be zealous in the ministry, to "be aglow with the spirit."

### **Humility and Modesty**

<sup>7</sup> Read Romans 12:3, 16. The gifts we may have are due to Jehovah's "undeserved kindness." Paul states elsewhere: "Our being adequately qualified issues from God." (2 Cor. 3:5) Therefore, we should not glorify ourselves. We should humbly recognize that any fruitage we may have in our ministry is the result of God's blessing, not our own competence. (1 Cor. 3:6, 7) In line with this, Paul states: "I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think." It is necessary that we have self-respect and find joy and satisfaction in our Kingdom service. However, being modest, or being aware of our limitations, will prevent us from becoming opinionated. Rather, we want to "think so as to have a sound mind."

<sup>8</sup> It would be foolish for us to boast of our own accomplishments. It is "God who makes it grow." (1 Cor. 3:7) Paul states that God has distributed to each member of the

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7. Why should we serve with humility and modesty?
  8. How can we avoid being "discreet in [our] own eyes"?

congregation “a measure of faith.” Rather than feeling superior, we should recognize what others are accomplishing according to the measure of faith that they have. Paul further says: “Be minded the same way toward others as to yourselves.” In another of his letters, the apostle tells us to do “nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with lowliness of mind considering that the others are superior to you.” (Phil. 2:3) It takes true humility and conscious effort to recognize that each of our brothers and sisters is superior to us in one way or another. Humility will prevent us from being “discreet in [our] own eyes.” While privileges of special service may bring some into the limelight, all will find deep joy in accomplishing “lowly things,” humble tasks that often go unnoticed by men.—1 Pet. 5:5.

### Our Christian Unity

<sup>9</sup> Read Romans 12:4, 5, 9, 10. Paul compares anointed Christians to members of a body serving unitedly under their Head, Christ. (Col. 1:18) He reminds spirit-begotten Christians that a body has many members with different functions and that they, “although many, are one body in union with Christ.” In a similar vein, Paul exhorted anointed Christians in Ephesus: “Let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ. From him all the body, by being harmoniously joined together and being made to cooperate through every joint that gives what is needed, according to the functioning of each respective member in due measure, makes for the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”—Eph. 4:15, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Although the “other sheep” are not part

9. Why does Paul compare spirit-begotten Christians to members of a body?
10. What authority should the “other sheep” recognize?

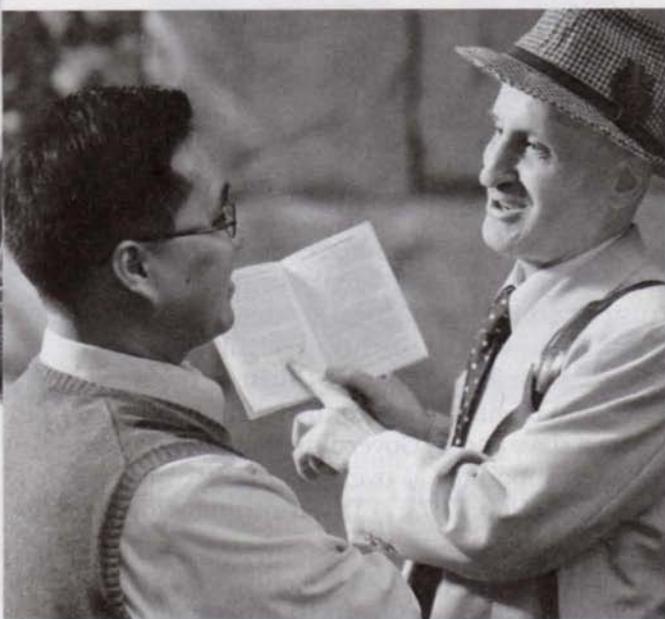
of the composite body of Christ, they can learn much from this illustration. (John 10:16) Paul states that Jehovah “subjected all things under [Christ’s] feet, and made him head over all things to the congregation.” (Eph. 1:22) Today, the other sheep are part of “all things” placed by Jehovah under the headship of his Son. They are also among the “belongings” that Christ has entrusted to his “faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45-47) Those with an earthly hope should, therefore, recognize Christ as their Head and be submissive to the faithful and discreet slave and its Governing Body and to the men appointed as overseers in the congregation. (Heb. 13:7, 17) This contributes to Christian unity.

<sup>11</sup> Such unity is based on love, the “perfect bond of union.” (Col. 3:14) In Romans chapter 12, Paul emphasizes this, saying that our love should be “without hypocrisy” and that “in brotherly love” we should have “tender affection for one another.” This leads to mutual respect. The apostle says: “In showing honor to one another take the lead.” Of course, we must not confuse love with sentimentality. We should do all we can to keep the congregation clean. When giving his counsel on love, Paul adds: “Abhor what is wicked, cling to what is good.”

### The Course of Hospitality

<sup>12</sup> Read Romans 12:13. Our love for our brothers will move us to “share with the holy ones according to their needs” and according to our ability. Even if we have few of this world’s goods, we can share what we have. Writing of Christians in Macedonia, Paul stated: “During a great test under affliction their abundance of joy and

11. Upon what is our unity based, and what other counsel did Paul give?
12. As to showing hospitality, what can we learn from Christians in ancient Macedonia?



their deep poverty made the riches of their generosity abound. For according to their actual ability, yes, I testify, beyond their actual ability this was, while they of their own accord kept begging us with much entreaty for the privilege of kindly giving and for a share in the ministry destined for the holy ones [in Judea].” (2 Cor. 8:2-4) Although poor themselves, Christians in Macedonia were very generous. They considered it a privilege to share with their needy brothers in Judea.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase “follow the course of hospitality” translates a Greek expression that implies showing initiative. *The New Jerusalem Bible* renders the expression “look for opportunities to be hospitable.” Hospitality is sometimes expressed by inviting someone for a meal, and when this is done in love, it is commendable. But if we show initiative, we will discover many other ways of being

13. What does it mean to “follow the course of hospitality”?

*How can each of us share in helping foreigners to learn about the Kingdom?*

hospitable. For one thing, if our means or our strength do not allow us to invite others for a meal, sharing a cup of coffee, tea, or some other beverage is also a way of showing hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Hospitality involves our outlook. The Greek word translated “hospitality” is made up of two root words meaning “love” and “stranger.” What are our feelings toward strangers, or foreigners? Christians who strive to learn another language so as to preach the good news among foreigners who have moved into the territory of their congregation can truly be counted among those who are following the course of hospitality. Of course, many of us are not in a position to learn another language. Still, all of us can have a meaningful share in helping foreigners by making good use of our booklet *Good News for People of All Nations*, which contains a Bible message in many languages. Have you had good results from using this booklet in the ministry?

#### Fellow Feeling

<sup>15</sup> Read Romans 12:15. Paul’s counsel in

14. (a) The Greek word translated “hospitality” is made up of what words? (b) In the ministry, how can we demonstrate our concern for foreigners?

15. How did Jesus exemplify the counsel given at Romans 12:15?

#### By Way of Review

- How do we demonstrate that we are “aglow with the spirit”?
- Why should we serve God with humility and modesty?
- In what ways may we show empathy and compassion to fellow believers?

this verse can be summed up in two words: Show empathy. We need to learn to understand and even share another person's feelings, whether joy or sadness. If we are aglow with the spirit, our feelings of shared joy or compassion will be evident. When 70 disciples of Christ returned joyfully from a preaching campaign and related the good results of their work, Jesus himself "became overjoyed in the holy spirit." (Luke 10:17-21) He shared their joy. On the other hand, Jesus 'wept with people who were weeping' when his friend Lazarus died.—John 11:32-35.

<sup>16</sup> We want to follow Jesus' example of showing empathy. When a fellow Christian rejoices, we wish to share his or her joy. Similarly, we should be sensitive to the pains and heartaches of our brothers and sisters.

16. How can we show fellow feeling, and who, in particular, need to do so?

Often, we can bring much relief to fellow believers who are suffering emotional pain if we take the time to listen to them with a truly sympathetic ear. And at times, we may find that our heart is so touched that our genuine empathy is expressed with tears. (1 Pet. 1:22) Elders, in particular, should follow the counsel that Paul gives on showing empathy.

<sup>17</sup> The verses we have considered thus far in Romans chapter 12 have given us counsel that can be applied in our personal lives as Christians and in our relationship with our brothers. In the next article, we will examine the remaining verses of this chapter, which discuss how we should view and deal with people outside the Christian congregation, including opposers and persecutors.

17. What have we learned thus far from Romans chapter 12, and what will be considered in the following article?

## "BE PEACEABLE WITH ALL MEN"

*"If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men."—ROM. 12:18.*

JESUS warned his followers that they would meet up with opposition from the nations of the world, and on the evening preceding his death, he explained why. He said to his apostles: "If you were part of the world, the world would be fond of what is its own. Now because you are no part of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, *on this account* the world hates you." —John 15:19.

1, 2. (a) What warning did Jesus give to his followers? (b) Where can we find counsel on how to react to opposition?

<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul experienced the truthfulness of Jesus' words. In his second letter to his young companion Timothy, Paul wrote: "You have closely followed my teaching, my course of life, my purpose, my faith, my long-suffering, my love, my endurance, my persecutions, my sufferings." Then Paul added: "In fact, all those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted." (2 Tim. 3:10-12) In chapter 12 of his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul gave wise counsel on how they should react to opposition. His



*Giving practical assistance to our neighbors may help overcome prejudice*

words can give us guidance in this time of the end.

### **"Provide Fine Things"**

<sup>3</sup> Read Romans 12:17. Paul explained that when faced with hostility, we should not retaliate in kind. Heeding his counsel is particularly important in homes that are religiously divided. The Christian mate resists the temptation to repay an unkind word or act with another unkindness. No good comes from 'returning evil for evil.' On the contrary, such an attitude can only aggravate the situation.

<sup>4</sup> Paul recommends a better way: "Provide fine things in the sight of all men." In the domestic setting, a wife who shows genuine kindness to her husband after he makes un-

3, 4. How can the counsel given at Romans 12:17 be applied (a) in a religiously divided home? (b) in our dealings with neighbors?

pleasant comments about her beliefs may well defuse a potentially explosive situation. (Prov. 31:12) Carlos, now a member of a Bethel family, relates how his mother overcame the strong opposition of his father by remaining kind and taking proper care of the home. "She encouraged us children always to be respectful to him. She insisted that I play *boules* (a French bowling game) with him even though it was not my favorite game. But it did put him in a good mood." He eventually began to study the Bible and got baptized. As to providing "fine things in the sight of all men," Jehovah's Witnesses have often overcome prejudice by providing practical assistance to their neighbors when a disaster strikes.

### **Melting Opposition With "Fiery Coals"**

<sup>5</sup> Read Romans 12:20. In choosing the words recorded in this verse, Paul doubtless had in mind what we read at Proverbs 25:21, 22: "If the one hating you is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. For coals are what you are raking together upon his head, and Jehovah himself will reward you." In view of his counsel found in Romans chapter 12, Paul could hardly have meant that the illustrative coals were to inflict punishment or shame upon an opposer. Rather, the proverb—as well as Paul's similar words to the Romans—seems to refer to an ancient method used for smelting metal ores. The 19th-century English scholar Charles Bridges noted: "Surround the intractable metal beneath and above; not only putting it over the fire, but *heaping coals of fire upon it*. Few hearts are so obdurate, as not to melt

5, 6. (a) In what sense are "fiery coals" heaped upon the head of an enemy? (b) Relate a local experience that shows how applying the counsel found at Romans 12:20 can yield good results.

under the mighty energy of patient, self-denying, burning love."

<sup>6</sup> Like "fiery coals," acts of kindness can warm the hearts of opposers and perhaps melt down their hostility. Kind actions can win people over to a more favorable attitude toward Jehovah's people and the Bible message they preach. The apostle Peter wrote: "Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that, in the thing in which they are speaking against you as evildoers, they may as a result of your fine works of which they are eyewitnesses glorify God in the day for his inspection."—1 Pet. 2:12.

### "Be Peaceable With All Men"

<sup>7</sup> Read Romans 12:18. During the last evening that Jesus spent with his apostles, he told them: "I leave you peace, I give you my peace." (John 14:27) The peace that Christ leaves with his disciples is the inner calm they experience when they feel that they are loved and approved by Jehovah God and his beloved Son. This inner peace should move us to live peaceably with others. Genuine Christians are peace lovers and peacemakers.—Matt. 5:9, ftn.

<sup>8</sup> One way to be a peacemaker within the family circle is to settle disagreements as quickly as possible rather than allow situations to deteriorate. (Prov. 15:18; Eph. 4:26) This also holds true within the Christian congregation. The apostle Peter links the pursuit of peace with restraint of the tongue. (1 Pet. 3:10, 11) James too, after giving firm counsel on the proper use of the tongue and the need to avoid jealousy and contentiousness, wrote: "The wisdom from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable,

7. What is the peace that Christ leaves with his disciples, and what should it move us to do?

8. How can we be peacemakers at home and in our congregation?

reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, not making partial distinctions, not hypocritical. Moreover, the fruit of righteousness has its seed sown under peaceful conditions for those who are making peace."—Jas. 3:17, 18.

<sup>9</sup> In his statement found at Romans 12:18, Paul goes beyond the need to be peaceable within the family circle and in the congregation. He says that we should be "peaceable with *all* men." That includes neighbors, fellow employees, schoolmates, and people we meet in our public ministry. The apostle qualifies his counsel, however, saying: "If possible, as far as it depends upon you." That means doing all we reasonably can to be "peaceable with all" but not to the

9. While trying to be "peaceable with all men," what should we keep in mind?

*Do you strive to be a peacemaker within the congregation?*



extent of compromising God's righteous principles.

### Vengeance Belongs to Jehovah

<sup>10</sup> *Read Romans 12:19.* Even with "those not favorably disposed" toward our work and our message, including outright opposers, we will keep ourselves "restrained under evil" and act "with mildness." (2 Tim. 2:23-25) Paul counsels Christians not to avenge themselves but to "yield place to the wrath." To whose wrath is Paul referring? He could hardly mean that we should give free rein to our own wrath. Clearly, we yield place to God's wrath. As Christians, we know that it does not belong to us to take vengeance. The psalmist wrote: "Let anger alone and leave rage; do not show yourself heated up only to do evil." (Ps. 37:8) And Solomon counseled: "Do not say: 'I will pay back evil!' Hope in Jehovah, and he will save you." —Prov. 20:22.

<sup>11</sup> If opposers do us harm, the wise course is to leave it to Jehovah to punish them if and when he sees fit. Showing that he had Jehovah's wrath in mind, Paul added: "It is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.'" (Compare Deuteronomy 32:35.) Were we to try to avenge ourselves, we would be acting presumptuously, taking it upon ourselves to do what Jehovah has reserved as his prerogative. Furthermore, we would be showing a lack of faith in Jehovah's promise: "I will repay."

<sup>12</sup> Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul stated: "God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing the truth in an unrighteous way." (Rom. 1:18) Jehovah's wrath will be revealed from heav-

10, 11. In what sense do we "yield place to the wrath," and why is this appropriate?

12. When will Jehovah's wrath be revealed, and how?

en by means of his Son at the time of "the great tribulation." (Rev. 7:14) That will be "proof of the righteous judgment of God," as Paul explained in another of his inspired letters: "This takes into account that it is righteous on God's part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you, but, to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus."—2 Thess. 1:5-8.

### Conquering Evil With Good

<sup>13</sup> *Read Romans 12:14, 21.* Fully confident that Jehovah will fulfill his purposes, we can safely concentrate all our efforts on the work he has given us to do—preaching "in all the inhabited earth" the "good news of the kingdom." (Matt. 24:14) We know that this Christian activity will provoke the anger of our enemies, for Jesus warned us: "You will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name." (Matt. 24:9) Consequently, we are not surprised or discouraged when we meet up with opposition. The apostle Peter wrote: "Beloved ones, do not be puzzled at the burning among you, which is happening to you for a trial, as though a strange thing were befalling you. On the contrary, go on rejoicing forasmuch as you are sharers in the sufferings of the Christ."—1 Pet. 4:12, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Rather than feeling animosity toward our persecutors, we try to enlighten them, realizing that some among them may be acting out of ignorance. (2 Cor. 4:4) We endeavor to heed Paul's counsel: "Keep on

13, 14. (a) Why are we not surprised when we encounter opposition? (b) How can we bless those who persecute us?

blessing those who persecute; be blessing and do not be cursing." (Rom. 12:14) One way to bless opposers is to pray for them. Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount: "Continue to love your enemies, to do good to those hating you, to bless those cursing you, to pray for those who are insulting you." (Luke 6:27, 28) The apostle Paul knew from his own experience that a persecutor can become a faithful disciple of Christ and a zealous servant of Jehovah. (Gal. 1:13-16, 23) In another letter, Paul stated: "When being reviled, we bless; when being persecuted, we bear up; when being defamed, we entreat." —1 Cor. 4:12, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, a true Christian heeds the closing verse of Romans chapter 12: "Do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good." The source of all evil is Satan the Devil. (John 8:44; 1 John 5:19) In the revelation given to the apostle John, Jesus revealed that his anointed brothers have "conquered [Satan] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their witnessing." (Rev. 12:11) This shows that the best way to conquer Satan and the evil influence he is exercising over the present system of things is to do good by our work of witnessing, preaching the good news of the Kingdom.

### Rejoicing in the Hope

<sup>16</sup> Our brief consideration of chapter 12 of Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome has reminded us of many things. We learned that as dedicated servants of Jehovah, we should be willing to make sacrifices. Moved by God's spirit, we make sacrifices willingly because our power of reason has convinced

15. What is the best way to conquer evil with good?
- 16, 17. What has Romans chapter 12 taught us about (a) how we should use our lives? (b) how we want to act within the congregation? (c) how we should treat those who oppose our faith?

us that such is the will of God. We are aglow with the spirit and use our varied gifts with zeal. We serve with all due humility and modesty, doing our utmost to preserve our Christian unity. We follow the course of hospitality and show genuine fellow feeling.

<sup>17</sup> Romans chapter 12 also gives us abundant counsel on how we should react to opposition. We should not retaliate in kind. We should try to overcome opposition with acts of kindness. To the extent possible, without violating Bible principles, we should endeavor to live peaceably with all men. This applies in the family circle, within the congregation, with neighbors, at work, at school, and in our public ministry. Even when faced with outright hostility, we do our best to conquer evil with good, remembering that vengeance belongs to Jehovah.

<sup>18</sup> *Read Romans 12:12.* In addition to all this wise, practical counsel, Paul gives three admonitions. Since we could never do all these things without Jehovah's help, the apostle advises us to "persevere in prayer." This will enable us to follow his further counsel to "endure under tribulation." Finally, we need to keep our minds fixed on the future that Jehovah holds in store for us and to "rejoice in the hope" of everlasting life, be it in heaven or on earth.

18. What three admonitions are given at Romans 12:12?

### By Way of Review

- How should we react to opposition?
- In what areas should we try to be peacemakers, and how?
- Why should we not seek to avenge ourselves?

## Questions From Readers

### What lesson is imparted at Proverbs 24:27?

In giving advice to a young man, the writer of Proverbs states: "Prepare your work out of doors, and make it ready for yourself in the field. Afterward you must also build up your household." What point is being made in this inspired proverb? That a man should prepare properly *before* he gets married and starts his own family, recognizing the responsibilities that come with such a commitment.

In the past, this verse has sometimes been explained as meaning that a husband and father must not only care for his secular work but also work to build up, or encourage, his family, for example by means of spiritual instruction. While that thought is certainly true and Scriptural, it does not seem to be the thrust of this verse. Why not? Consider two reasons.

First, the verse is not talking about building up in the sense of encouraging, or strengthening, an *existing* family. Rather, the idea is literally to build a house. The word rendered "build up" may also be figurative, in the sense of building, or establishing, a household—that is, marrying and having children.

Second, the verse emphasizes doing things in proper order, as if to say, "First you do this; then you do that." So, then, could the proverb be suggesting that secular responsibilities come before spiritual ones? Certainly not!

In Bible times, if a man wanted to "build up [his] household," or establish a family by getting married, he needed to ask himself, 'Am I ready to care for and support a wife and any children we may later have?' Before starting a family, he had work to do, caring for his fields or crops. Thus, *Today's English Version*

pointedly renders this verse: "Don't build your house and establish a home until your fields are ready, and you are sure that you can earn a living." Does the same principle apply today?

Yes. A man who wants to marry needs to prepare properly for that responsibility. If he is physically able, he will have to work. Of course, a man's hard work in caring for his family should not be limited to physical matters. God's Word indicates that a man who does not care for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of his family is worse than one without faith! (1 Tim. 5:8) Hence, in preparing for marriage and family life, a young man should ask himself such questions as these: 'Am I reasonably prepared to provide materially for a family? Am I ready to be the spiritual head of a household? Will I fulfill the responsibility of conducting a regular Bible study with my wife and children?' God's Word certainly stresses those vital responsibilities.—Deut. 6:6-8; Eph. 6:4.

### What questions about marriage should a young man ask himself?

So a young man who seeks a wife should think carefully about the principle found at Proverbs 24:27. Likewise, a young woman does well to ask herself if she is prepared for the responsibilities of being a wife and mother. A young couple may ask similar questions when thinking about the possibility of raising children. (Luke 14:28) Living by such inspired guidance can help God's people to avoid much heartache and to enjoy a rewarding family life.

# "YOU ARE MY FRIENDS"

*"You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you."*—JOHN 15:14.

THE men sitting in the upper room with Jesus came from a variety of backgrounds. The brothers Peter and Andrew had been fishermen. Matthew was formerly a tax collector—a member of a profession that was despised by the Jews. Some, such as James and John, had likely known Jesus from boyhood. Others, such as Nathanael, may have known him for only a few years. (John 1:43-50) Yet, all present on that momentous Passover night in Jerusalem were convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. (John 6:68, 69) It must surely have warmed their hearts to hear him say to them: "I have called you friends, because all the things I have heard from my Father I have made known to you."—John 15:15.

<sup>2</sup> Those words of Jesus to his faithful apostles apply in principle to all anointed Christians today and, by extension, to their "other sheep" companions. (John 10:16) No matter what our background, we can have the privilege of being friends of Jesus. Our friendship with him is of utmost importance because being his friends makes us friends of Jehovah too. In fact, it is impossible to draw close to Jehovah without first drawing close to Christ. (*Read John 14:6, 21.*) What, then, must we do to become and remain friends of Jesus? Before discussing that important subject, let us examine Jesus' own example of being a good friend and see what we can learn from the way his disciples responded to him.

1, 2. (a) Jesus' friends came from what different backgrounds? (b) Why is it vital that we be friends of Jesus?

## Jesus' Example of Being a Good Friend

<sup>3</sup> "Many are the friends of the rich person," wrote wise King Solomon. (Prov. 14:20) That observation sums up the tendency of imperfect humans to form friendships based on what they can receive rather than on what they can give. Jesus displayed no such weakness. He was not swayed by a person's financial or social status. True, Jesus felt love for a rich young ruler and invited him to be his follower. However, Jesus directed that man to sell what he had and give to the poor. (Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18, 23) Jesus was known, not for his connections to the wealthy and prominent, but for befriending the lowly and despised.—Matt. 11:19.

<sup>4</sup> Certainly, Jesus' friends were flawed individuals. Peter on occasion failed to view matters from a spiritual perspective. (Matt. 16:21-23) James and John showed an ambitious spirit when they asked that Jesus give them prominent positions in the Kingdom. Their action incensed the other apostles, and the issue of prominence was an ongoing cause of contention. Jesus, however, patiently tried to correct the thinking of his friends and did not easily become exasperated with them.—Matt. 20:20-28.

<sup>5</sup> Jesus did not remain friends with these imperfect men because he was overly

3. For what was Jesus known?
4. Why can it be said that Jesus' friends were flawed?
- 5, 6. (a) Why did Jesus remain friends with most of the apostles? (b) Why did Jesus end his friendship with Judas?



*Jesus was interested in what  
his friends thought and how they felt*

indulgent or blind to their imperfections. Rather, he chose to focus on their good intentions and positive qualities. For example, Peter, James, and John fell asleep instead of supporting Jesus through his most trying hour. Jesus was understandably disappointed in them. Even so, he saw that their motives were good, saying: "The spirit, of course, is eager, but the flesh is weak." —Matt. 26:41.

<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Jesus ended his friendship with Judas Iscariot. Even though Judas maintained the outward appearance of friendship, Jesus detected that this former close companion had allowed his heart to be corrupted. Because Judas had become a friend of the world, he had made himself an enemy of God. (Jas. 4:4) Therefore, Jesus had already dismissed Judas when He declared His friendship with the remaining 11 faithful apostles.—John 13:21-35.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus looked past the faults of his loy-

7, 8. How did Jesus express his love for his friends?

al friends and acted in their best interests. For instance, he prayed for his Father to protect them during their trials. (*Read John 17:11.*) Jesus showed consideration for their physical limitations. (Mark 6:30-32) And he was interested not just in telling them what *he* thought but also in hearing and understanding what *they* thought and felt.—Matt. 16:13-16; 17:24-26.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus both lived and died for his friends. True, he knew that he must offer his life as a legal requirement to satisfy his Father's standard of justice. (Matt. 26:27, 28; Heb. 9:22, 28) But Jesus gave his life as an expression of love. "No one has love greater than this," said Jesus, "that someone should surrender his soul in behalf of his friends." —John 15:13.

#### How Did the Disciples Respond to Jesus' Friendship?

<sup>9</sup> Jesus was generous in giving of his time, affection, and resources. As a result, people were drawn to him and were happy to give to him in return. (Luke 8:1-3) From personal experience, Jesus could say: "Practice giving, and people will give to you. They will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing. For with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you in return." —Luke 6:38.

<sup>10</sup> Of course, some did try to associate with Jesus purely for what they could get out of him. These false friends abandoned Jesus when they misunderstood something he said. Rather than give Jesus the benefit of the doubt, they jumped to a wrong conclu-

9, 10. How did people react to Jesus' generosity?

sion and turned their backs on him. In contrast, the apostles were loyal. Their friendship with Christ was often tested, but they did their best to support him during good times and bad. (*Read John 6:26, 56, 60, 66-68.*) On his final night as a human on earth, Jesus expressed his appreciation to his friends, saying: "You are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials."—Luke 22:28.

<sup>11</sup> Soon after Jesus commended his disciples for their loyalty, these same men abandoned him. Briefly, they allowed fear of man to overwhelm their love for Christ. Again, Jesus forgave them. After his death and resurrection, he appeared to them and reassured them of his friendship. Moreover, he entrusted them with a sacred commission—to make disciples "of people of all the nations" and to be witnesses of him "to the most distant part of the earth." (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8) How did the disciples respond?

<sup>12</sup> The disciples poured their hearts and souls into spreading the Kingdom message. With the backing of Jehovah's holy spirit, they soon filled Jerusalem with their teaching. (Acts 5:27-29) Not even the threat of death could dissuade them from obeying Jesus' command to make disciples. Within just a few decades of their receiving Jesus' command, the apostle Paul could write that the good news had been preached "in all creation that is under heaven." (Col. 1:23) Certainly, these disciples proved that they appreciated the bond of friendship they shared with Jesus!

<sup>13</sup> Those who became disciples also allowed Jesus' teachings to affect their personal life. For many, this meant making big changes in their conduct and personality. Some new disciples were formerly homo-

11, 12. How did Jesus reassure the disciples, and how did they respond?

13. Jesus' disciples allowed his teachings to affect them in what ways?

sexuals, adulterers, drunkards, or thieves. (1 Cor. 6:9-11) Others had to change their attitude toward those of another race. (Acts 10:25-28) Still, they obeyed Jesus. They put away their old personality and put on the new. (Eph. 4:20-24) They became familiar with "the mind of Christ," understanding and imitating his way of thinking and acting.—1 Cor. 2:16.

### Friendship With Christ Today

<sup>14</sup> Many of those first-century Christians had known Jesus personally or had seen him after his resurrection. Obviously, we have not had that privilege. How, then, can we be friends of Christ? One way is to obey the direction provided by the faithful and discreet slave class, which consists of Jesus' spirit-anointed brothers still alive on earth. Jesus promised that during "the conclusion of the system of things," he would appoint this slave "over all his belongings." (Matt. 24:3, 45-47) Today, the vast majority of those who seek to be friends of Christ are not members of this slave class. How does their response to the direction they receive from the faithful slave class influence their friendship with Christ?

<sup>15</sup> *Read Matthew 25:31-40.* Jesus called those who would make up the faithful slave

14. What did Jesus promise to do during "the conclusion of the system of things"?

15. What determines whether a person will be classed as a sheep or a goat?

### How Would You Answer?

- What example did Jesus set in being a good friend?
- How did the disciples respond to Jesus' friendship?
- How can we prove ourselves to be friends of Christ?



*How can we demonstrate our desire to be friends of Christ?*

class his brothers. In the illustration about the separating of the sheep from the goats, Jesus clearly states that he takes personally the way we treat his brothers. In fact, he said that the determining factor that would distinguish a sheep from a goat would be the way an individual treated even "the least of these [his] brothers." Therefore, the primary way that those with the earthly hope demonstrate their desire to be friends with Christ is by supporting the faithful slave class.

<sup>16</sup> If you hope to live on earth under God's Kingdom, how can you express your friendship toward Christ's brothers? Let us consider just three ways. First, by wholeheartedly sharing in the preaching work. Christ commanded his brothers to preach the good news worldwide. (Matt. 24:14) However, the remaining ones of Christ's brothers on earth today would be hard-pressed to shoulder

16, 17. How can we express our friendship toward Christ's brothers?

that responsibility without the assistance of their other sheep companions. Really, each time members of the other sheep class engage in the preaching work, they help Christ's brothers to fulfill their sacred commission. The faithful and discreet slave class deeply appreciates this act of friendship, as does Christ.

<sup>17</sup> A second way that those of the other sheep class can help Christ's brothers is by financially supporting the preaching work. Jesus encouraged his followers to make friends for themselves by means of "the unrighteous riches." (Luke 16:9) Not that we can buy friendship with Jesus or Jehovah. Rather, by using our material assets to further Kingdom interests, we prove our friendship and love, not just in word, but "in deed and truth." (1 John 3:16-18) We provide such financial support when we engage in the preaching work, when we donate money toward the construction and maintenance of our meeting facilities, and when we contribute funds toward the worldwide preaching work. Whether the amount we contribute is small or great, both Jehovah and Jesus certainly appreciate our cheerful giving.—2 Cor. 9:7.

<sup>18</sup> A third way that all of us prove that we are friends of Christ is by cooperating with the direction provided by congregation elders. These men are appointed by holy spirit under Christ's direction. (Eph. 5:23) "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive," wrote the apostle Paul. (Heb. 13:17) At times, we may find it a challenge to obey the Bible-based direction given to us by the local elders. We are likely aware of their imperfections, and this may distort our view of their counsel. Still, Christ, the Head of the congregation, is

18. Why should we obey the Bible-based direction provided by congregation elders?

pleased to use these imperfect men. Therefore, the way we react to their authority directly influences our friendship with Christ. When we overlook the faults of the elders and joyfully follow their direction, we prove our love for Christ.

### Where We Can Find Good Friends

<sup>19</sup> Jesus continues to care for us not only through the oversight of loving shepherds but also by providing us with spiritual mothers and brothers and sisters within the congregation. (*Read Mark 10:29, 30.*) When you first began associating with Jehovah's organization, how did your relatives react? Hopefully, they supported your efforts to draw close to God and Christ. But Jesus warned

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19, 20. What can we find within the congregation, and what will we next consider?

that sometimes "a man's enemies will be persons of his own household." (Matt. 10:36) How comforting to know that within the congregation, we can find those who will stick closer to us than a literal brother! —Prov. 18:24.

<sup>20</sup> As indicated by Paul's personal greetings at the conclusion of his letter to the congregation in Rome, he forged many close friendships. (Rom. 16:8-16) The apostle John concluded his third letter with the words: "Give my greetings to the friends by name." (3 John 14) Obviously, he too developed many enduring friendships. How can we imitate the example of Jesus and the early disciples by building and maintaining healthy friendships with our spiritual brothers and sisters? Our next article will consider the answer to this question.

## MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIPS IN A LOVELESS WORLD

*"These things I command you, that you love one another."*—JOHN 15:17.

DURING his final night on earth, Jesus encouraged his loyal disciples to remain friends with one another. Earlier in the evening, he said that the love they displayed for one another would identify them as his followers. (John 13:35) The apostles needed to remain close friends if they were to endure the trials that lay ahead and to accomplish the work that Jesus would soon assign them. Indeed, first-century Christians became known for their unbreakable devotion to God and to one another.

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1. Why did first-century Christians need to remain close friends?

<sup>2</sup> Today, what a pleasure it is to be associated with a worldwide organization whose members follow the pattern set by those first-century Christians! We are determined to obey Jesus' command to display genuine love for one another. However, during these last days, people in general are disloyal and fail to show natural affection. (2 Tim. 3:1-3) The friendships they do form are often shallow and self-serving. To keep our identity as true Christians, we must rise above such attitudes. Let us, then, consider the following:

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2. (a) What are we determined to do, and why?  
(b) What questions will we consider?

What is the foundation of good friendships? How can we make good friends? When might we need to end a friendship? And how can we maintain upbuilding friendships?

### What Is the Basis of Good Friendships?

<sup>3</sup> The strongest friendships are founded on a love for Jehovah. King Solomon wrote: "If somebody could overpower one alone, two together could make a stand against him. And a threefold cord cannot quickly be torn in two." (Eccl. 4:12) When Jehovah is the third cord in a friendship, that friendship will endure.

<sup>4</sup> True, those who do not love Jehovah can also form rewarding friendships. But when individuals are drawn together by a mutual love for God, their friendship will be unshakable. If misunderstandings arise, true friends will treat each other in a way that pleases Jehovah. If opposers of God try to cause divisions, these enemies discover that friendships among true Christians are unbreakable. Throughout history, servants of Jehovah have proved their willingness to face death rather than betray one another.

*—Read 1 John 3:16.*

<sup>5</sup> Without a doubt, the most satisfying friendships we can enjoy are with those who love Jehovah. Consider the example of Ruth and Naomi. These women formed a friendship that is among the most admirable recorded in the Bible. Why was their friendship so enduring? Ruth revealed the reason when she said to Naomi: "Your people will be my people, and your God my God. . . . May Jehovah do

3, 4. What is the basis of the strongest friendships, and why?

5. Why was the friendship between Ruth and Naomi so enduring?

so to me and add to it if anything but death should make a separation between me and you." (Ruth 1:16, 17) Obviously, Ruth and Naomi shared a deep love for God, and they allowed this love to influence the way they treated each other. As a result, both women were blessed by Jehovah.

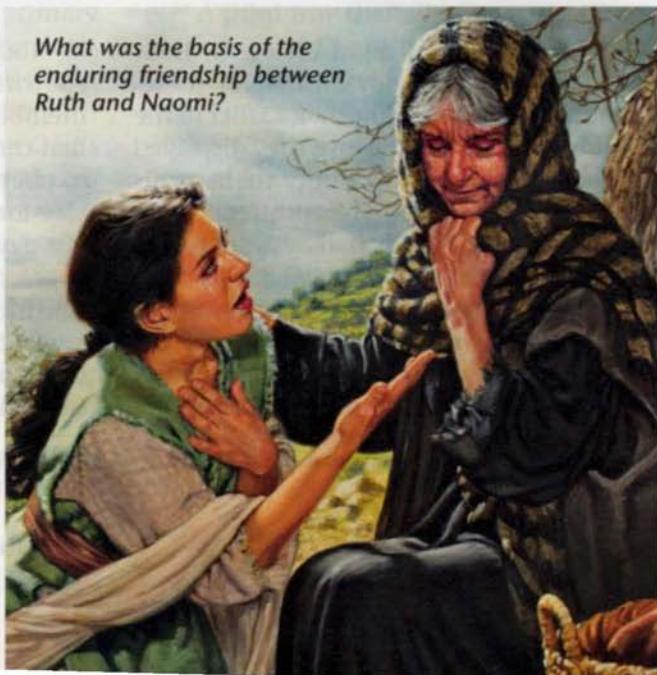
### How to Make Good Friends

<sup>6</sup> The example of Ruth and Naomi demonstrates that good friendships are not formed by accident. A mutual love for Jehovah is the foundation. But enduring friendships are a product of hard work and self-sacrifice. Even siblings who worship Jehovah within Christian families need to work at forming a close friendship. How, then, can you make good friends?

<sup>7</sup> *Take the initiative.* The apostle Paul encouraged his friends in the congregation in Rome to "follow the course of hospitality." (Rom. 12:13) Following a literal course involves taking a series of steps, one after the other. Likewise, being hospitable involves taking a series of small, regular actions. No-

6-8. (a) Enduring friendships are a product of what? (b) How can you take the initiative in making friends?

*What was the basis of the enduring friendship between Ruth and Naomi?*



*Do you regularly show hospitality?*

body else can walk the path of hospitality for you. (Read Proverbs 3:27.) One way you can be hospitable is by inviting different ones in the congregation to share a simple meal with you. Can you make it a regular part of your routine to show hospitality to members of your congregation?

<sup>8</sup> Another way you can take the initiative in making friends is by inviting different ones to share with you in the preaching work.

When you stand at a stranger's door and hear your companion speak from the heart about his or her love for Jehovah, you cannot help but be drawn closer to that individual.

<sup>9</sup> *Widen out in your affections.* (Read 2 Corinthians 6:12, 13.) Have you ever felt that there is just no one in your congregation whom you can befriend? If so, could it be that you are restricting your view of who can be a friend? The apostle Paul set a good example in widening out in his affections. At one time, he would never have thought of forming close friendships with non-Jews. However, he became "an apostle to the nations."—Rom. 11:13.

<sup>10</sup> In addition, Paul did not restrict his friendships to those of his own age group. For instance, he and Timothy became close friends despite a difference in age and background. Today, many young ones treasure the friendships they have formed with older



members of the congregation. "I have a very dear friend who is in her 50's," says Vanessa, who is in her early 20's. "I can tell her anything that I can tell friends my age. And she cares about me so much." How are such friendships formed? Vanessa says: "I had to seek this friendship out and not just wait for it to come to me." Are you willing to build friendships with those outside your age bracket? Jehovah will certainly reward you for your efforts.

<sup>11</sup> *Be loyal.* "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress," wrote Solomon. (Prov. 17:17) When composing those words, Solomon may have had in mind the friendship that his father, David, enjoyed with Jonathan. (1 Sam. 18:1) King Saul wanted his son Jonathan to inherit the throne of Israel. But Jonathan accepted the fact that Jehovah had chosen David for this privilege. Unlike Saul, Jonathan did not become envious of

9, 10. What example did Paul set, and how may we imitate him?

11. What can we learn from the example of Jonathan and David?

David. He did not resent the praise David received, nor did he swallow the slander that Saul spread about David. (1 Sam. 20:24-34) Are we like Jonathan? When our friends receive privileges, are we happy for them? When they suffer hardships, do we comfort and support them? If we hear harmful gossip about a friend, are we quick to believe it? Or, like Jonathan, do we loyally defend our friend?

### When Friendships Need to End

<sup>12</sup> When a Bible student begins to make changes in his lifestyle, he may face a real challenge regarding friendships. He may have companions whose company he enjoys but who do not live by the Bible's moral code. In the past, he may regularly have spent time socializing with them. Now, though, he sees that their activities could have a bad influence on him, and he feels the need to limit his contact with such companions. (1 Cor. 15:33) Even so, he may feel that if he does not associate with them, he is being disloyal.

<sup>13</sup> If you are a Bible student who faces this challenge, remember that a true friend will be happy that you are trying to improve your life. He or she may even want to join with you in learning about Jehovah. On the other hand, false friends will "go on speaking abusively of you" because you do not run with them to "the same low sink of debauchery."

12-14. What challenge do some Bible students face, and how can we assist them?

### How Would You Answer?

- How can we make good friends?
- When might a friendship need to end?
- What must we do to maintain strong friendships?

(1 Pet. 4:3, 4) Really, it is these friends who are being disloyal to you, not the reverse.

<sup>14</sup> When Bible students are abandoned by former friends who have no love for God, members of the congregation can fill the void. (Gal. 6:10) Do you personally know those attending your meetings who are studying the Bible? Are you on occasion able to provide them with some upbuilding association?

<sup>15</sup> What, though, if a friend inside the congregation decides to turn his or her back on Jehovah, perhaps needing to be disfellowshipped? Such a circumstance can be very distressing. Describing her reaction when a close friend stopped serving Jehovah, one sister said: "I felt as if something inside of me died. I thought my friend was firmly grounded in the truth, but she was not. I wondered if she had been serving Jehovah just to please her family. I then began to reassess my own motives. Was I serving Jehovah for the right reasons?" How did this sister cope? "I threw my burden on Jehovah," she says. "I am determined to show Jehovah that I love him for who he is, not just because he provides me with friends inside his organization."

<sup>16</sup> We cannot expect to remain a friend of God if we side with those who choose to be friends of the world. The disciple James wrote: "Do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." (Jas. 4:4) We can prove our love for God by trusting that He will help us cope with the loss of a friend if we are loyal to Him. (*Read Psalm 18:25.*) The sister quoted earlier sums up the matter: "I learned that

15, 16. (a) How should we react if a friend stops serving Jehovah? (b) How can we prove our love for God?

we cannot make someone love Jehovah or love us. Ultimately, it is a personal choice." What, though, can we do to maintain up-building friendships with those who remain inside the congregation?

### Maintaining Good Friendships

<sup>17</sup> Good communication breathes life into a friendship. As you read the Bible accounts involving Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, and Paul and Timothy, you will notice that good friends speak freely but respectfully to each other. Regarding the way we should communicate with others, Paul wrote: "Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt." Paul was specifically referring to the way we should talk to those "on the outside," that is, those who are not our Christian brothers. (Col. 4:5, 6) Surely, if nonbelievers deserve respect when we speak to them, how much more so do our friends inside the congregation!

<sup>18</sup> Good friends value each other's opinion, so communication between them needs to be both gracious and forthright. Wise King Solomon wrote: "Oil and incense are what make the heart rejoice, also the sweetness of one's companion due to the counsel of the soul." (Prov. 27:9) Is that how you view any counsel you receive from a friend? (*Read Psalm 141:5.*) If a friend expresses concern about some course of action that you are taking, how do you react? Do you view the comments as an act of loving-kindness, or do you take offense?

<sup>19</sup> The apostle Paul enjoyed a close relationship with the elders of the congregation in Ephesus. He likely knew some of those men when they first became believers. Dur-

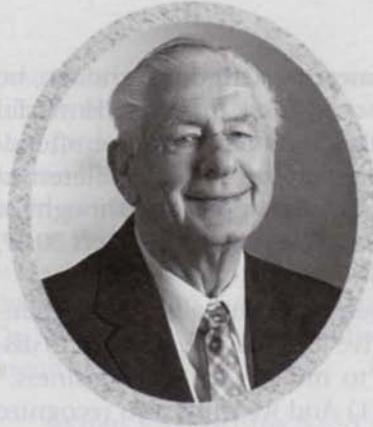
17. How do good friends speak to each other?
- 18, 19. How should we view any counsel that we receive from a Christian friend, and what example did the elders in Ephesus set for us?

ing his final meeting with them, though, he gave them some frank counsel. How did they react? Paul's friends were not offended. Instead, they appreciated his interest in them, and they even wept at the thought of not being able to see him again.—Acts 20:17, 29, 30, 36-38.

<sup>20</sup> Good friends not only accept wise counsel but also give it. Of course, we need to discern when "to mind [our] own business." (1 Thess. 4:11) And we must also recognize that each of us "will render an account for himself to God." (Rom. 14:12) But when necessary, a loving friend will kindly remind a companion about Jehovah's standards. (1 Cor. 7:39) For example, what would you do if you noticed that an unmarried friend was becoming emotionally attached to an unbeliever? Out of fear of harming your friendship, would you hold back from voicing your concerns? Or if your friend ignored your counsel, what would you do? A good friend would seek the help of loving shepherds in assisting a companion who has taken a false step. Such a course requires courage. Yet, no lasting damage will come to a friendship based on love for Jehovah.

<sup>21</sup> *Read Colossians 3:13, 14.* At times, we will give our friends "cause for complaint" against us, and they too will do or say things that irritate us. "We all stumble many times," wrote James. (Jas. 3:2) However, the measure of a friendship is not how often we sin against each other but how completely we forgive those grievances. How vital it is that we build strong friendships by communicating openly and forgiving one another freely! If we display such love, it will become "a perfect bond of union."

20. What will a loving friend do?
21. What will all of us do at times, but why is it vital that we maintain strong friendships in the congregation?



# HOW THREE CONVENTIONS SHAPED THE COURSE OF MY LIFE

AS TOLD BY  
GEORGE WARIENCEHUCK

HAVE you ever been so touched by something you heard at one of our conventions that it moved you to make big changes in your life? That happened to me. Looking back, I realize that three conventions especially shaped the course of my life. The first helped me to be less timid; the second, to be more content; the third, to be more giving. However, before I tell you about those changes, let me fill you in on some events that took place years before these conventions were held—events related to my childhood.

I was born in 1928, the youngest of three children. My sisters, Margie and Olga, and I were raised in South Bound Brook, New Jersey, U.S.A., then a town with about 2,000 inhabitants. Though we were poor, Mother was generous. Whenever she found the means to prepare a special meal, she shared it with neighbors. When I was nine years old, Mother was visited by a Witness who spoke Hungarian, my mother's native tongue, which moved her to listen to the Bible's message. Later, Bertha, a sister in her early 20's, continued the Bible study and helped Mother to become a servant of Jehovah.

Unlike Mother, I was timid by nature, lacking confidence. To make things worse, Mother tended to belittle me. When I tearfully asked her, "Why do you always criticize me?"

she told me that she loved me but that she did not want to spoil me. Mother had good intentions, but the lack of commendation left me feeling inferior.

One day, a neighbor who often spoke kindly to me asked me to accompany her sons to their church's Sunday school. I knew that I would displease Jehovah by going, but I was afraid to offend that kind neighbor. So for several months, I went to church even though I felt ashamed of myself. At school, fear of man likewise led me to act against my conscience. The school principal, a domineering man, made sure that the teachers made all children salute the flag. I too saluted. This went on for about a year, and then a change took place.

## A Lesson in Courage

In 1939 a book study group began meeting in our home. Ben Mieszkalski, a young pioneer brother, conducted. We called him Big Ben—and for good reason. To me, he looked as tall and as wide as our front door. Yet, in spite of his imposing build, he had a soft heart, and his warm smile quickly put me at ease. So when Ben asked me to join him in field service, I gladly accepted. We became friends. When I was down, he talked to me in the way a caring older brother would speak

to his younger sibling. That meant a lot to me, and I came to love him dearly.

In 1941, Ben asked our family to come along in his car to a convention in St. Louis, Missouri. Imagine how excited I was! I had never traveled farther than 80 kilometers from home, and now I was going to a place more than 1,500 kilometers away! However, there were problems in St. Louis. The clergy had ordered their parishioners to cancel any arrangements they had made for having Witnesses stay in their homes. Many canceled. The family to whom we had been assigned had also been threatened. Still, they welcomed us. Our hosts said that they were not going to break their promise of providing a room. Their courage impressed me.

My sisters were baptized at that convention. The same day, Brother Rutherford, from Brooklyn Bethel, gave a stirring discourse in which he asked all children who wanted to do the will of God to stand up. Some 15,000 stood up. I did too. Then he asked those of us who wanted to do our utmost in the preaching work to say, "Aye." Along with the other children, I shouted, "Aye!" Thunderous applause followed. I was fired up.

After the convention, we visited a brother in West Virginia. He related that once while he was in the preaching work, an angry mob had beaten him and had covered him with tar and feathers. I listened breathlessly. "But I will go on preaching," the brother said. When

Evelyn's mother (left)  
and my mother



My friend Ben



we left that brother, I felt like David. I was ready to take on Goliath—my school principal.

Back in school, I approached the principal. He glared at me. I prayed silently to Jehovah for help. Then I blurted out: "I have been to a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. I will not salute the flag anymore!" There was a long silence. The principal slowly rose from his desk and walked toward me. His face was red with anger. He yelled: "Salute the flag or you are expelled!" This time I did not compromise, and deep inside I felt a joy I had never felt before.

I could hardly wait to tell Ben what had happened. When I saw him in the Kingdom Hall, I shouted: "I am expelled from school! I did not salute the flag!" Ben put his arm around me, smiled, and said: "For sure, Jehovah loves you." (Deut. 31:6) How those words motivated me! On June 15, 1942, I was baptized.

### Learning the Secret of Contentment

After World War II, the nation's economy exploded, and a wave of materialism swept the country. I had a well-paying job and could buy things I previously could only dream of. Some of my friends got motorcycles; others renovated their homes. I bought a brand-new car. Soon my desire for more material comforts began to push aside my concern for Kingdom interests. I knew I was heading in the wrong direction. Fortunately, in 1950 a convention in New York City helped me to readjust my course.

At that convention, one speaker after another encouraged the audience to forge ahead with the preaching work. "Strip down to the bare necessities, and run the race," one speaker urged us. He seemed to be talking just to me. I also saw the graduation of a

Gilead class, which made me think, 'If these Witnesses of my age group can forgo material comforts to serve abroad, I should be willing to do the same here at home.' By the end of the convention, I had made up my mind to become a pioneer.

In the meantime, I had begun dating Evelyn Mondak, a zealous sister in the congregation that I went to. Evelyn's mother, who raised six children, was a fearless woman. She loved to do street work in front of a huge Roman Catholic Church. No matter how often the angry priest told her to leave, she did not budge. Like her mother, Evelyn had no fear of man.—Prov. 29:25.

In 1951, Evelyn and I were married, quit our jobs, and began pioneering. A circuit overseer encouraged us to move to Amagansett, a village on the Atlantic shore some 160 kilometers from New York City. When the congregation informed us that they had no accommodations for us, we looked for a trailer but failed to find one we could afford. Then we spotted a run-down trailer. The owner asked 900 dollars for it—exactly the sum we had received as wedding gifts. We bought it, fixed it up, and pulled it to our new territory. However, we arrived there completely penniless and wondered how we would survive as pioneers.

Evelyn cleaned houses, and I found a late-night cleaning job in an Italian restaurant. "Any leftover food," the owner said, "take home to your wife." So when I got home at two in the morning, our trailer filled with the aroma of pizzas and pasta. Those warmed-over meals were a treat, especially in winter when we were shivering inside the icy trailer. Moreover, the brothers in the congregation at times left a big fish on the steps of the trailer. During the years we served alongside those dear brothers in Amagansett, we learned that being content



*On Brazilian soil*

with the basics results in a satisfying life. Those were happy years.

#### **Motivated to Give More of Ourselves**

In July 1953, we greeted hundreds of missionaries who had come from foreign assignments to attend an international convention in New York City. They related fascinating experiences. Their excitement was contagious. Moreover, when a convention speaker stressed that many lands had not yet been reached with the Kingdom message, we knew what we had to do—give more of ourselves by expanding our ministry. Right at the convention, we applied for missionary training. That same year, we were invited to attend the 23rd class of Gilead School, which started in February 1954. What a privilege that was!

We were thrilled when we learned that we were assigned to serve in Brazil. Before we left on our 14-day voyage by steamer, a responsible brother at Bethel told me: "Nine single missionary sisters will travel with you and your wife to Brazil. Look after them!" Can you imagine the amused look on the sailors' faces when they watched me coming aboard with ten young women in tow? However, the

sisters had no problem at all in handling the situation. Still, I was relieved when we safely stepped onto Brazilian soil.

After learning Portuguese, I was assigned to do circuit work in Rio Grande do Sul, a state in southern Brazil. The circuit overseer I was to replace, a single brother, told my wife and me: "I'm surprised a married couple was sent here. This place is rugged." Congregations were scattered over a vast rural area, and some could be reached only by truck. If you bought a meal for the driver, he allowed you to clamber onto his truck. Like riders on horseback, we sat with spread legs on top of the cargo, clutching with both hands the straps tied around the load. Whenever the truck took sharp turns, we held on for dear life as the towering cargo leaned over and we gazed into gaping valleys. However, seeing the happy faces of the brothers who eagerly waited for our arrival made such day-long journeys worth all the effort.

We lived in the homes of the brothers. They were very poor, but that did not stop them from giving. In one isolated region, all the brothers worked in a meatpacking plant. Their low wages allowed them to eat only once a day. If they did not work for a day, they did not get paid. Still, during our visits, they took two days off from work to support congregation activities. They put their trust in Jehovah. Those humble brothers taught us lessons about making sacrifices in behalf of God's Kingdom that we will never forget. Living among them, we received an education that no school can offer. As I think back, remembering those brothers, tears of joy still well up in my eyes.

In 1976, we returned to the United States in order to care for my ailing mother. Leaving Brazil was hard, but we are grateful to have witnessed outstanding growth of Kingdom interests in that country. Whenever we receive letters from Brazil, many sweet memo-

ries from that wonderful time in our life come back.

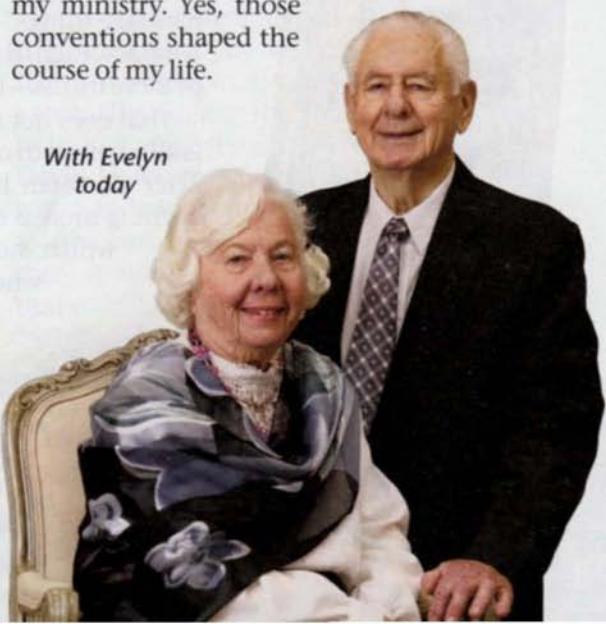
### Precious Reunions

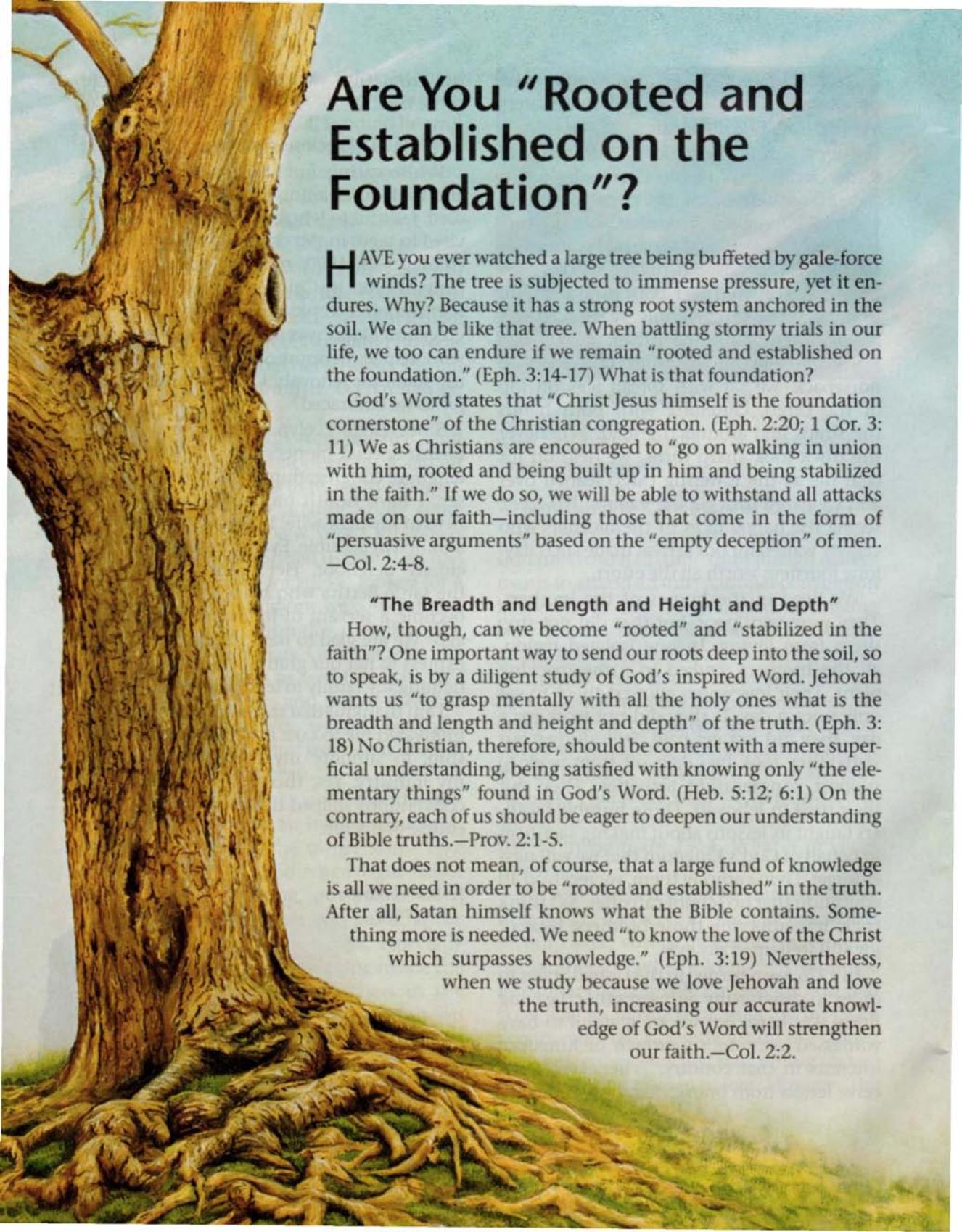
While caring for Mother, we pioneered and took on cleaning jobs. In 1980, Mother died, faithful to Jehovah. After that, I was invited to serve in the circuit work in the United States. In 1990, my wife and I visited a congregation in Connecticut, and there we met someone very special. One of the congregation elders was Ben—yes, the same Ben who helped me some 50 years earlier to take my stand for Jehovah. Can you imagine our joy as we embraced?

Since 1996, Evelyn and I have served as infirm special pioneers in the Portuguese-language congregation in Elizabeth, New Jersey. I have health problems, but with the help of my dear wife, I share in the ministry as much as possible. Evelyn also assists a frail, elderly neighbor. Her name? Bertha—yes, the same Bertha who helped my mother to become a servant of Jehovah over 70 years ago! We are glad to have the opportunity to express to her our gratitude for all she did in helping my family to learn the truth.

I am thankful that those early conventions motivated me to take my stand for true worship, to simplify my life, and to expand my ministry. Yes, those conventions shaped the course of my life.

*With Evelyn  
today*





# Are You “Rooted and Established on the Foundation”?

HAVE you ever watched a large tree being buffeted by gale-force winds? The tree is subjected to immense pressure, yet it endures. Why? Because it has a strong root system anchored in the soil. We can be like that tree. When battling stormy trials in our life, we too can endure if we remain “rooted and established on the foundation.” (Eph. 3:14-17) What is that foundation?

God’s Word states that “Christ Jesus himself is the foundation cornerstone” of the Christian congregation. (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11) We as Christians are encouraged to “go on walking in union with him, rooted and being built up in him and being stabilized in the faith.” If we do so, we will be able to withstand all attacks made on our faith—including those that come in the form of “persuasive arguments” based on the “empty deception” of men.—Col. 2:4-8.

## “The Breadth and Length and Height and Depth”

How, though, can we become “rooted” and “stabilized in the faith”? One important way to send our roots deep into the soil, so to speak, is by a diligent study of God’s inspired Word. Jehovah wants us “to grasp mentally with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth” of the truth. (Eph. 3:18) No Christian, therefore, should be content with a mere superficial understanding, being satisfied with knowing only “the elementary things” found in God’s Word. (Heb. 5:12; 6:1) On the contrary, each of us should be eager to deepen our understanding of Bible truths.—Prov. 2:1-5.

That does not mean, of course, that a large fund of knowledge is all we need in order to be “rooted and established” in the truth. After all, Satan himself knows what the Bible contains. Something more is needed. We need “to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge.” (Eph. 3:19) Nevertheless, when we study because we love Jehovah and love the truth, increasing our accurate knowledge of God’s Word will strengthen our faith.—Col. 2:2.

## "To the Ephesians"

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in union with Christ, just as he chose us in union with him *before the founding of the world*, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love. For he foreordained us to the adoption through Jesus Christ as sons to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, in praise of his glorious undeserved kindness which he kindly conferred upon us by means of his loved one. By means of him we have the release by ransom through the blood of that one, yes, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his undeserved kindness. This he caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and good sense, in that he made

known to us the sacred secret of his will. It is according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for an administration at the full limit of the appointed times, namely, to gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth."

—Eph. 1:3-10.



### Test Your Understanding

Right now, why not test your own understanding of a few of the vital truths found in the Bible? Doing so may encourage you to be even more diligent in personal Bible study. As an example, read the opening verses of the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians. (See the box "To the Ephesians.") After reading these verses, ask yourself, 'Do I understand the meaning of the phrases in that Bible passage that are italicized in the box?' Let us consider them, one at a time.

### Foreordained "Before the Founding of the World"

Paul wrote to fellow believers: "[God] foreordained us to the adoption through Jesus Christ as sons to himself." Indeed, Jehovah determined that he would adopt some hu-

mans into his own perfect heavenly family. These adopted sons of God would rule as kings and priests with Christ. (Rom. 8:19-23; Rev. 5:9, 10) In his original challenge against Jehovah's sovereignty, Satan implied that God's human creation was flawed. How fitting, then, that Jehovah chose members of that same human family to have a role in eventually ridding the universe of all badness, including the source of evil, Satan the Devil! However, Jehovah did not foreordain which individual humans would be adopted as his sons. Rather, God determined that there would be a group, or class, of humans that would rule with Christ in heaven.—Rev. 14:3, 4.

What "world" did Paul mean when he wrote to fellow Christians that they, as a group, were chosen "before the founding of

the world"? He was not referring to a time before God created the earth or mankind. That would violate the fundamental principle of justice. How could Adam and Eve be held accountable for their actions if God had predetermined that they would fail even before they were created? So, then, when did God determine how he would remedy the situation that was created when Adam and Eve joined Satan in his rebellion against God's sovereignty? Jehovah did so only after our original parents rebelled but before a world of imperfect yet redeemable humankind came into existence.

#### **"According to the Riches of His Undeserved Kindness"**

Why did Paul state that the arrangements considered in the opening verses of Ephesians came about "according to the riches of [God's] undeserved kindness"? He did that in order to emphasize that Jehovah was not obliged to redeem fallen mankind.

By nature, none of us have any merit by which we can earn redemption. However, moved by his deep love for the human family, Jehovah made special arrangements to rescue us. Considering our imperfection and sinfulness, our redemption truly is, as Paul said, an undeserved kindness.

#### **The Sacred Secret of God's Purpose**

Initially, God did not reveal how he would remedy the damage done by Satan. It was a "sacred secret." (Eph. 3:4, 5) Later, with the establishment of the Christian congregation, Jehovah revealed details of how he would accomplish his original purpose for mankind and the earth. "At the full limit of the appointed times," explained Paul, God put into operation "an administration," a system of administering matters that will lead to the unification of all his intelligent creatures.

The first stage of that unification began at Pentecost 33 C.E. when Jehovah started to gather those who would rule with Christ in heaven. (Acts 1:13-15; 2:1-4) The second stage would be the gathering together of those who will live on a paradise earth under Christ's Messianic Kingdom. (Rev. 7:14-17; 21:1-5) The term "administration" does not refer to the Messianic Kingdom, since that Kingdom was not established until 1914. Rather, the term refers to God's handling, or managing, of affairs so as to accomplish his purpose of restoring universal unity.

#### **Be "Full-Grown in Powers of Understanding"**

No doubt, good personal study habits will help you to grasp fully "the breadth and length and height and depth" of the truth. However, there can also be no doubt that man's current hurried lifestyle makes it easy for Satan to weaken—if not destroy—such habits. Do not allow him to do that to you. Use the "intellectual capacity" that God has given you to become "full-grown in powers of understanding." (1 John 5:20; 1 Cor. 14:20) Make sure that you understand why you believe what you believe and that you can always give "a reason for the hope in you." —1 Pet. 3:15.

Imagine that you were present in Ephesus when Paul's letter was first read. Would his words not have moved you to want to grow "in the accurate knowledge of the Son of God"? (Eph. 4:13, 14) Surely! Therefore, let Paul's inspired words move you in the same way today. Having a deep love for Jehovah and an accurate knowledge of his Word will help you to remain firmly "rooted and established on the foundation" of Christ. In that way, you will be able to endure during any storm that Satan may yet stir up against you before the complete end of this wicked world arrives.—Ps. 1:1-3; Jer. 17:7, 8.

# FAMILY WORSHIP VITAL FOR SURVIVAL!

MAGINE how fear-inspiring "the war of the great day of God the Almighty" will be! (Rev. 16:14) In vivid figures of speech, the prophet Micah wrote: "The mountains must melt . . . , and the low plains themselves will split apart, like wax because of the fire, like waters being poured down a steep place." (Mic. 1:4) What will be the disastrous result for those not serving Jehovah? God's Word states: "Those slain by Jehovah will certainly come to be in that day from one end of the earth clear to the other end of the earth." —Jer. 25:33.

In view of such warnings, family heads—many of whom are single parents—would do well to ask themselves about their children who are old enough to reason, 'Will they survive this climactic event?' The Bible provides assurance that they will if they are spiritually alive and strong to the extent appropriate for their age.—Matt. 24:21.

## The Importance of Having a Time for Family Worship

As a parent, make sure that you do all you can to bring up your children "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Eph. 6:4) The importance of studying the Bible with your children cannot be overemphasized. We want our young ones to be like the Christians in Philippi, whom Paul commended for their willing obedience to Jehovah. He wrote: "My beloved ones, in the way that you have always obeyed, not during my presence only, but now much more readily during my absence, keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling." —Phil. 2:12.

Do your children adhere to Jehovah's laws during your absence? What about when they are at school? How can you help your children to be convinced of the wisdom of Jehovah's laws so that they are guided by these even when you are not present?

Family worship can play a large role in building your child's faith in this regard. Therefore, let us discuss three key elements to making your family Bible study a success.

### Be Consistent

The Bible indicates that God's angelic sons are invited into his presence *at appointed times*. (Job 1:6) Do the same with your children. Set a definite day and time for your Family Worship evening, and then stick to it. In addition, have an alternate time set aside to allow for unforeseen circumstances.

As the months go by, do not allow a hit-or-miss attitude to creep in. Remember, your children are your most important Bible students. Yet, Satan would like to make them his prey. (1 Pet. 5:8) If you give up this valuable Family Worship evening for a night of television viewing or some other mundane activity, Satan will have gained a victory.—Eph. 5:15, 16; 6:12; Phil. 1:10.

### Make It Practical

The Family Worship evening should be more than an academic exercise. Strive to make it practical. How? At times, choose topics that pertain to what your child will face in the days or weeks to come. For instance, why not incorporate practice sessions for the ministry? Young ones enjoy doing



*Practice sessions can help your children deal with peer pressure*

things that they do well. Rehearsing presentations and thinking of ways to handle objections will help them to become more confident as they engage in various forms of the Kingdom-preaching work.—2 Tim. 2:15.

You can also have practice sessions that will help your children deal with peer pressure. Chapter 15 of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 2, can be used as a basis for family discussion. The “Peer-Pressure Planner” on pages 132 and 133 provides suggestions and also allows opportunities for your child to create responses that he or she feels comfortable with. A statement at the bottom of page 133 encourages youths: “Rehearse your responses with a parent or a mature friend.” From time to time, why not make such rehearsals part of your Family Worship evening?

Family worship provides opportunity for parents to emphasize the benefits of having spiritual goals. In this regard, *Young People Ask*, Volume 2, has excellent information in chapter 38, entitled “What Will I Do With

My Life?” While discussing the chapter, help your child to appreciate that centering one’s life on serving Jehovah is the best course to follow. Cultivate in your child’s heart the desire to pioneer, serve at Bethel, attend the Ministerial Training School, or pursue some other form of full-time service.

A word of caution: Some well-intentioned parents focus so much on what they want their child to become that they neglect to acknowledge what he or she is already doing. Of course, it is good to encourage your children to set such fine goals as Bethel service and missionary work. In doing so, however, be careful not to exasperate your child with your expectations and cause him or her to become downhearted. (Col. 3:21) Always remember that your son or daughter must come to love Jehovah with *his* or *her* own heart—not yours. (Matt. 22:37) So find ways to commend your child for what he or she is doing well, and resist the urge to focus on what he or she is not doing. Build up appreciation for all that Jehovah has done. Then let your child’s heart respond to Jehovah’s goodness.

#### **Make It Enjoyable**

The third key element for a successful Family Worship evening is to make it enjoyable. How can you accomplish this? Perhaps on occasion you could listen to one of the audio dramas or watch and discuss one of the videos produced by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Or you could read a portion of the Bible together, assigning a part to each family member.

There are features in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* that provide an excellent basis for family discussion. For example, you might use the feature on page 31 of each *Awake!* magazine, entitled “How Would You An-

## Be Creative

"When studying with our young daughters, my husband and I went over the material to prepare for a congregation meeting and then we had our girls draw a picture that summarized the lesson. At times, we reenacted Bible scenes or had practice sessions for field service presentations. We kept the study appropriate for their age, interesting, positive, and fun."—J.M., United States.

"To help the son of my Bible student appreciate what it was like to use a scroll in Bible times, we printed out the book

of Isaiah after deleting the chapter and verse numbers. We joined the pages and attached each end to a tube. The boy then tried to do what Jesus did at the synagogue in Nazareth. The account at Luke 4:16-21 relates that Jesus 'opened the scroll [of Isaiah] and found' the passage for which he was looking. (Isa. 61: 1, 2) However, when the boy tried to do the same, he found it hard to locate Isaiah 61 using that long scroll with no chapter and verse numbers. Impressed by Jesus' skill in handling scrolls, the boy exclaimed: 'Jesus was awesome!'—Y.T., Japan.

swer?" In every other issue, the public edition of *The Watchtower* contains the study project "For Our Young People." These projects alternate with a series for younger boys and girls entitled "Teach Your Children."

Articles in the "Young People Ask" series in *Awake!* will be of particular interest to parents of adolescents, as will the book *Young People Ask*, Volume 2. When using that book, do not overlook the box "What Do You Think?" at the end of each chapter. That box is more than a review. The questions in that box can be used as an outline for family discussion.

Be careful, though, not to turn the family study into an interrogation session. For example, do not try to force your child to read aloud what he or she has written on the pages entitled "My Journal" or in any of the other interactive portions of the book. In "A Note to Parents," the book states on page 3: "To encourage your adolescents to write in their book with candor, allow them a measure of privacy. Later they may well

open up to you on the issues they have written about."

If you keep your family worship consistent, practical, and enjoyable, Jehovah will richly bless your efforts. This special family time will contribute to keeping your loved ones spiritually alive and strong.

*Strive to make the Family Worship evening enjoyable*



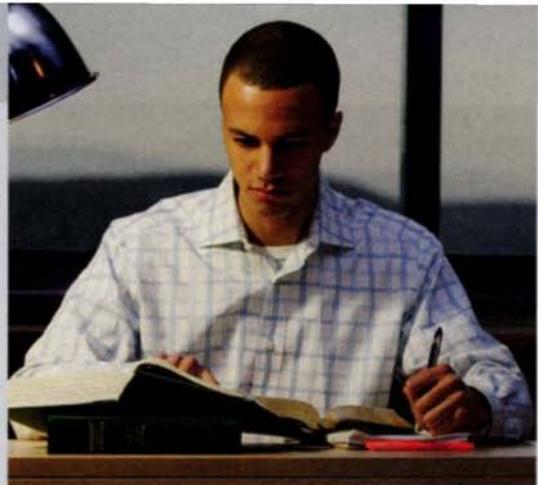
# Have You Set Aside Time for Bible Study?

LAST year, the Governing Body announced an adjustment to the congregation meeting schedule that allows more time for Bible study and discussion as a family. If you are a family head, make sure that a meaningful, regular family Bible study is conducted with your wife and children. Married couples without children will want to use this period to study the Bible together. Single brothers and sisters with no family responsibilities will be able to use this time well for personal Bible study.

Many have expressed appreciation for the arrangement of having a Family Worship evening. For example, Kevin, an elder, wrote: "The words 'thank you' are not strong enough to express how we in the congregation feel. As elders, we have discussed how we use the free night to do exactly as the Governing Body has asked—to study with our families."

Jodi, whose husband is an elder, wrote: "We have three daughters, aged 15, 11, and 2. We recently moved to a sign-language congregation. It takes a lot of time and effort to prepare for all the meetings. Now, with this adjustment, we have an additional evening that allows us to focus on family worship!"

John and JoAnn, a married couple serving as regular pioneers, wrote: "Our family Bible



study has often been sporadic because we had to sandwich it in between various congregation activities. This new arrangement is a gift from Jehovah that spiritually refreshes us—if we use the time in the way we are supposed to."

Tony, a single brother in his mid-20's, sets aside Tuesday evening as his personal study night. He uses other times of the week to prepare for congregation meetings. However, Tony says, "I especially look forward to Tuesday." Why? "That evening is my special time with Jehovah." Tony explains: "For about two hours, I study subjects that strengthen my relationship with Jehovah. Having more time for study allows me to linger on the Bible verses I read." The result? "Jehovah's counsel is sinking deeper into my heart than before." Can he give an example? "In the *Insight* book, I read about the friendship between David and Jonathan. I learned much from Jonathan's selfless disposition. His example helped me to see more clearly what it means to be a true friend. I really look forward to discovering many more of such gems on Tuesday nights!"

No doubt, all servants of Jehovah will benefit greatly from making good use of the additional time that is now available for meaningful Bible study and family worship.