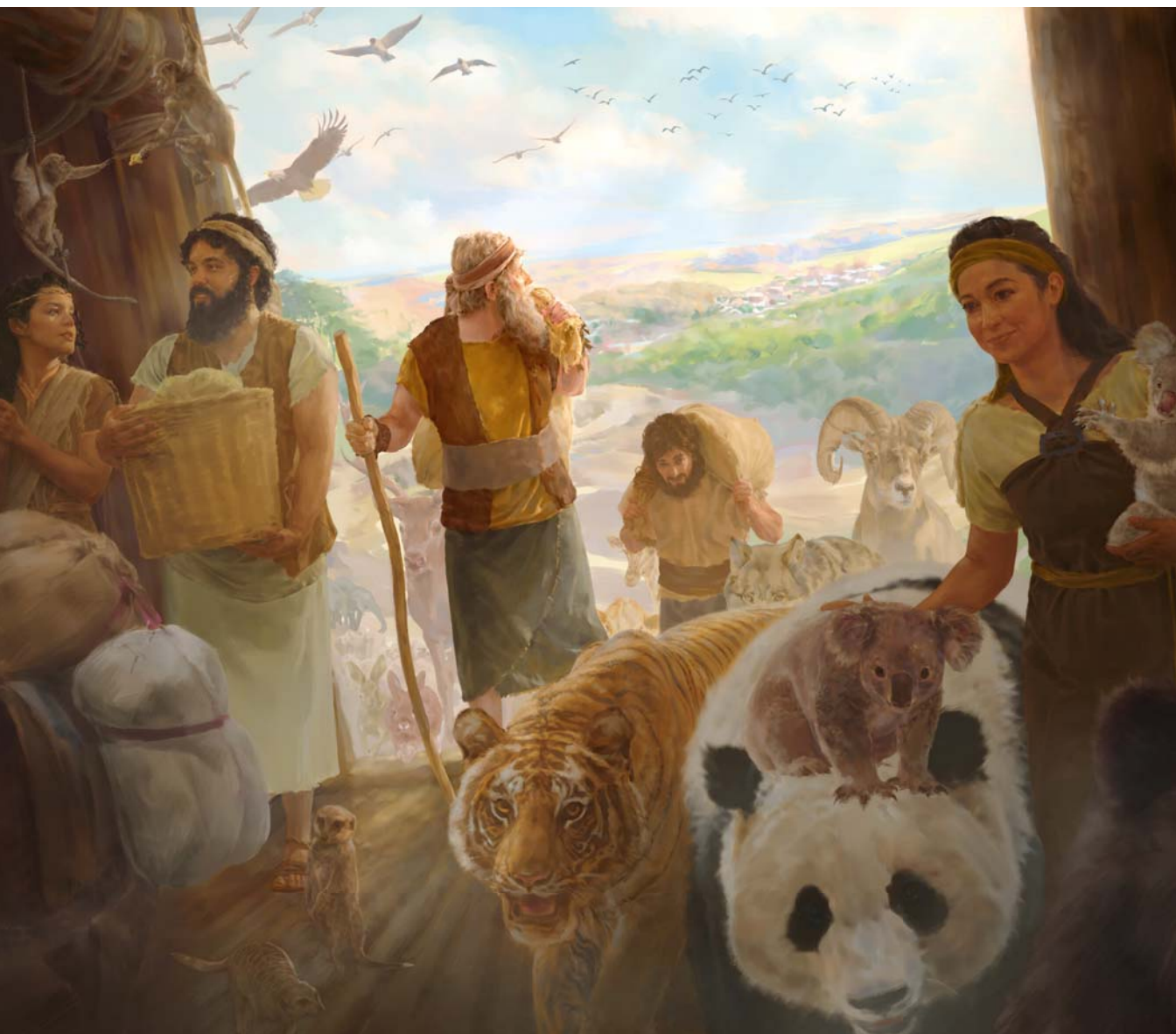


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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
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SONG 36

We Guard Our Hearts

PREVIEW

True repentance involves more than simply saying that we are sorry for a sin we have committed. Using the examples of King Ahab, King Manasseh, and the wayward son of Jesus' parable, this article will help us understand what repentance really is. It will also discuss factors that elders must consider when weighing the repentance of a fellow believer who has committed a serious sin.

What Is True Repentance?

"I have come to call . . . sinners to repentance."—LUKE 5:32.

LET us look closely at two kings who lived in ancient times. One ruled over the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel; the other, over the two-tribe kingdom of Judah. Though they lived at different times, they had a lot in common. Both kings rebelled against Jehovah and corrupted his people. Both were guilty of idolatry and murder. However, there was a difference between these two men. One of them pursued a wicked course to the end of his life, but the other repented and was forgiven for his terrible deeds. Who were they?

² Their names were Ahab, king of Israel, and Manasseh, king of Judah. The differences between these two men can teach us a lot about a very important subject—repentance. (Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:23) What is repentance, and how is it shown? We need to know because we want Jehovah to forgive us when we sin. To find the answers to these questions, we will examine the lives of these two kings and see what we can learn from their examples. Then we will consider what Jesus taught about repentance.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM KING AHAB'S EXAMPLE

³ Ahab was the seventh king of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. He married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidon, a wealthy nation to the north. The marriage may have brought wealth into the land of Israel. But it also further damaged the nation's relationship with Jehovah.

- 1-2. How did two kings differ, and what questions will we consider?
3. What kind of a king was Ahab?

Jezebel was a Baal worshipper, and she incited Ahab to promote that despicable religion, which involved temple prostitution and even child sacrifice. No prophet of Jehovah was safe while Jezebel had power. She had many of them put to death. (1 Ki. 18:13) Ahab himself “was worse in the eyes of Jehovah than all those who were prior to him.” (1 Ki. 16:30) Jehovah was not blind to the actions of Ahab and Jezebel. He was totally aware of what they were doing. Mercifully, though, Jehovah sent the prophet Elijah to warn His people to change their ways before it was too late. But Ahab and Jezebel refused to listen.

⁴ Finally, Jehovah’s patience came to an end. He sent Elijah to pronounce sentence on Ahab and Jezebel. Their entire family line was to be wiped out. Elijah’s words hit Ahab hard! Surprisingly, that arrogant man “humbled himself.”—1 Ki. 21:19-29.

⁵ Although Ahab humbled himself on that occasion, his conduct afterward showed that he was not truly repentant. He did not try to remove Baal worship from his kingdom. And he did not promote the worship of Jehovah. Ahab showed his lack of repentance in other ways as well.

⁶ Later, when Ahab invited good King Jehoshaphat of Judah to join him in the war against the Syrians, Jehoshaphat suggested that they first consult a prophet of Jehovah. Initially, Ahab rejected the idea, saying: “There is still

one more man through whom we can inquire of Jehovah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies good things concerning me, only bad.” Even so, they consulted the prophet Micaiah. Sure enough, the man of God foretold bad news for Ahab! Rather than repentantly seek Jehovah’s forgiveness, wicked Ahab had the prophet thrown into prison. (1 Ki. 22:7-9, 23, 27) Although the king managed to imprison Jehovah’s prophet, he could not prevent the prophecy from coming true. In the battle that followed, Ahab was killed.—1 Ki. 22:34-38.

⁷ After Ahab died, Jehovah revealed how he viewed that man. When good King Jehoshaphat came home safely, Jehovah sent the prophet Jehu to rebuke him for having allied himself with Ahab. Jehovah’s prophet said: “Is it *the wicked* you should be helping, and is it *those who hate Jehovah* you should love?” (2 Chron. 19:1, 2) Now consider: If Ahab’s repentance had been genuine, surely the prophet would not have described him as a wicked man who hated Jehovah. Clearly, although Ahab had shown a degree of regret, he never fully repented.

⁸ What can we learn from Ahab’s example? When he heard Elijah’s message of calamity against his family line, Ahab initially humbled himself. That was a good start. But his later actions showed that he was not repentant at heart. Repentance, then, must involve more than temporarily expressing sorrow. Let us consider

4. What was the sentence pronounced on Ahab, and how did he react?

5-6. What suggests that Ahab was not truly repentant?

7. How did Jehovah describe Ahab after his death?

8. What can we learn about repentance from Ahab’s example?



Showing that he was not fully repentant, King Ahab throws God's prophet into prison
(See paragraphs 5-6)

another example that will help us understand what true repentance involves.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM KING MANASSEH'S EXAMPLE

⁹ Some two centuries later, Manasseh became king of Judah. He may have been even worse than Ahab! We read: "He did on a grand scale what was bad in Jehovah's eyes, to offend him." (2 Chron. 33:1-9) Manasseh set up altars to pagan gods, and he even put a carved image of a sacred pole—likely a symbol of sex worship—right into Jehovah's holy temple! He practiced magic, divination, and sorcery. He also "shed innocent blood in very great quantity." His vicious murders included making "his own sons pass through the fire," in sacrifice to false gods.—2 Ki. 21:6, 7, 10, 11, 16.

¹⁰ Like Ahab, Manasseh stubbornly ignored warnings that Jehovah gave him by means of His prophets. Finally, "Jehovah brought against [Judah] the army chiefs of the king of Assyria, and they captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with two copper fetters and took him to Babylon." There, imprisoned in a foreign land, Manasseh

apparently did some serious thinking. He "**kept humbling** himself greatly before the God of his forefathers." He went even further. "He begged Jehovah his God for favor." In fact, Manasseh "**kept praying** to Him." That wicked man was changing. He began to see Jehovah as "his God," and he prayed to him persistently.—2 Chron. 33:10-13.

¹¹ In time, Jehovah answered Manasseh's prayers. He saw the changes in that man's heart, as reflected in his prayers. Jehovah was moved by Manasseh's entreaty and restored him to the throne. Manasseh took full advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate the depth of his repentance. He did what Ahab had never done. He changed his conduct. He actively fought against false worship and promoted true worship. (**Read 2 Chronicles 33:15, 16.**) That surely required courage and faith, for Manasseh had been a bad influence on his family, his nobles, and his people for decades. But now, in his final years, Manasseh tried to undo some of the bad that he had done. Likely, he was a good influence on his young grandson Josiah, who later became a very good king.—2 Ki. 22:1, 2.

9. What kind of a king was Manasseh?

10. How did Jehovah discipline Manasseh, and how did the king respond?

11. According to 2 Chronicles 33:15, 16, how did Manasseh show that he was truly repentant?



Showing that he was truly repentant, King Manasseh fought against false worship
(See paragraph 11)

¹² What can we learn from Manasseh's example? He humbled himself, and he did more. He prayed, begging for mercy. And he changed his course. He worked hard to undo the harm that he had caused, and he sought to worship Jehovah and to help others to do the same. Manasseh's example gives hope to even the worst of sinners. We see powerful proof that Jehovah God is "good and ready to forgive." (Ps. 86:5) Forgiveness is possible—for those who are truly repentant.

¹³ Manasseh did more than feel sorry about his sins. That teaches us a vital lesson about repentance. Consider an illustration: You go to a bakery shop and ask for a cake. But instead of a cake, the shop clerk hands you an egg. Would you be satisfied? Of course not! Would it help if the clerk explained that the egg is a key ingredient of the cake? Again, of course not! Similarly, Jehovah asks the sinner for repentance. If the sinner feels sorry about his sin, that is good. Such a feeling is an important ingredient of repentance, but it is not the whole thing. What else is needed? We learn a lot from a touching parable that Jesus related.

12. What can we learn about repentance from Manasseh's example?

13. Illustrate a vital lesson about repentance.

IDENTIFYING TRUE REPENTANCE

¹⁴ Jesus told a heartwarming story about a wayward son, recorded at Luke 15:11-32. A young man rebelled against his father, left home, and traveled "to a distant country." There he led an immoral, debauched life. When hard times struck, though, he did some serious thinking. He realized how much better off he had been while in his father's house. As Jesus put it, the young man "came to his senses." He resolved to go back home and seek his father's forgiveness. The moment when the son realized how far he had fallen was important. But was that enough? No. He had to take action!

¹⁵ The lost son demonstrated sincere repentance for what he had done. He made the long journey home. Then when he approached his father, he said: "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy of being called your son." (Luke 15:21) The young man's heartfelt confession revealed that he wanted to repair his relationship with Jehovah. He also recognized that his actions had hurt his

14. In Jesus' parable, how did the wayward son show the first signs of repentance?

15. How did the lost son of Jesus' parable demonstrate his repentance?

After the wayward son came to his senses, he made the long journey back home (See paragraphs 14-15)



father. And he was ready to work hard to regain his father's favor, even being willing to be treated as one of his father's hired men! (Luke 15:19) This parable is not just a heartwarming story. The principles it teaches should be of interest to congregation elders when they are endeavoring to discern whether a fellow believer has repented of his serious wrongdoing.

¹⁶ It is no easy task for the elders to determine whether someone who has committed a serious sin is now truly repentant. Why not? The elders cannot read hearts, so they must rely on outward evidence that their brother has had a complete change of viewpoint toward his sin. In some cases, a person may have sinned so flagrantly that the elders who meet with him may not be convinced that he is genuinely repentant.

¹⁷ Consider an example. A brother commits adultery over a course of many years. Instead of seeking help, he con-

ceals his immoral conduct from his wife, his friends, and the elders. Finally, he is exposed. When confronted with the evidence, he admits to what he has done and even seems to be very sorry. Is that sufficient? The elders handling such a case would surely need to see more than sorrow. This was not a momentary lapse of judgment but a wicked course that lasted for years. The wrongdoer did not voluntarily confess; he was exposed. So the elders would need to see evidence of genuine changes in the sinner's thinking, feelings, and conduct. **(Read 2 Corinthians 7:11.)** It might take the man considerable time to make the needed changes. Very likely, he would be removed from the Christian congregation for a period of time.—1 Cor. 5:11-13; 6:9, 10.

¹⁸ To show that he is genuinely repentant, a disfellowshipped person would come to the meetings regularly and follow the elders' counsel to have a good routine of prayer and study. He would also diligently avoid the circumstances that led to his wrongdoing. If he works hard to repair his relationship with Jehovah, he can be assured that Jeho-

16. Why might it be difficult for the elders to discern the extent of someone's repentance?

17. (a) What example shows that a mere expression of sorrow may not be enough to demonstrate sincere repentance? (b) As described at 2 Corinthians 7:11, what is expected of a truly repentant person?

18. How can a disfellowshipped person show genuine repentance, and with what outcome?

vah will forgive him fully and that the elders will restore him to the congregation. Of course, when dealing with a wrongdoer, the elders evaluate each case in the light of its unique circumstances and they avoid judging harshly.

¹⁹ As we have learned, true repentance involves more than saying we are sorry that we have pursued a sinful course. It also involves a genuine change of mind and heart that leads to taking positive action. This includes abandoning a wrong course and turning around to walk in Jehovah's ways again. **(Read Ezekiel 33:14-16.)** A sinner's primary concern should be to repair his damaged relationship with Jehovah.

CALLING SINNERS TO REPENTANCE

²⁰ Jesus summed up an important feature of his ministry by saying: "I have come to call . . . sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32) That should be our desire as well. Suppose we learn that a close friend of ours has committed a serious sin. What should we do?

19. What does true repentance involve? (Ezekiel 33:14-16)

20-21. How might we help someone who has fallen into serious sin?

²¹ We would only harm our friend by trying to cover up his sin. Such efforts never succeed anyway because Jehovah is watching. (Prov. 5:21, 22; 28:13) You can help your friend by reminding him that the elders want to help. If your friend refuses to confess to the elders, you should inform the elders about the matter, thereby showing that you truly want to help him. His relationship with Jehovah is at risk!

²² What, though, if a sinner has traveled so far and so long into a course of sin that the elders decide he must be disfellowshipped? Would this mean that they have treated him unmercifully? In the next article, we will take a closer look at Jehovah's merciful way of disciplining sinners and how we can imitate it.

22. What will we discuss in the following article?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 4:** King Ahab angrily orders his guards to take Jehovah's prophet Micaiah off to prison. **Page 5:** King Manasseh directs workers to destroy the images that he had set up in the temple. **Page 6:** The wayward son, worn out after a long journey, is relieved when he finally sees his home in the distance.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| ■ What can we learn about repentance from King Ahab's example? | ■ What shows that King Manasseh was truly repentant? | ■ What can we learn about repentance from the wayward son in Jesus' parable? |
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SONG 44

A Prayer of the Lowly One

PREVIEW

Mercy is one of Jehovah's most appealing qualities, and it is one that each of us needs to cultivate. In this article, we will examine why Jehovah shows mercy, why we can say that his discipline is merciful, and how we can show this beautiful quality.

We Serve the God Who Is “Rich in Mercy”

“Jehovah is good to all, and his mercy is evident in all his works.”—PS. 145:9.

WHEN we think of a merciful person, we may picture someone who is kind, warmhearted, compassionate, and generous. The story Jesus told about the neighborly Samaritan may come to mind. That man of another nation “acted mercifully toward” a Jew who had fallen among thieves. The Samaritan “was moved with pity” for the injured Jew and lovingly arranged for his care. (Luke 10:29-37) This illustration highlights a beautiful quality of our God—mercy. That quality is a facet of God's love, and he displays it each day in the way that he deals with us.

² There is another aspect of mercy that may come to mind. It involves holding back punishment when there is a basis for doing so. In that sense, Jehovah has certainly been merciful toward us. “He has not dealt with us according to our sins,” the psalmist said. (Ps. 103:10) At other times, though, Jehovah may provide firm discipline to an erring one.

³ In this article, we will address three questions: Why does Jehovah show mercy? Is there a connection between firm discipline and mercy? And what can help us to show mercy? Let us see how God's Word answers these questions.

WHY JEHOVAH SHOWS MERCY

⁴ *Jehovah loves to be merciful.* The apostle Paul was in-

1. What may come to mind when we think of a merciful person?
2. What is another aspect of mercy?
3. What questions will we examine?
4. Why does Jehovah show mercy?



The father did not humiliate his wayward son; he welcomed him home

(See paragraph 6)



spired to write that God is “rich in mercy.” In this context, Paul was referring to God’s mercy in offering the hope of heavenly life to his imperfect, anointed servants. (Eph. 2:4-7) But Jehovah’s mercy is even more extensive than that. The psalmist David wrote: “Jehovah is good to all, and his mercy is evident in all his works.” (Ps. 145:9) Because Jehovah loves people, he extends mercy whenever he sees a basis for doing so.

⁵ More than anyone else, Jesus knows how much Jehovah loves to show mercy. This Father and Son were together in heaven during the course of thousands of years of human history. (Prov. 8:30, 31) On many occasions, Jesus saw how his Father showed mercy to sinful humans. (Ps. 78:37-42) In his teaching, Jesus often highlighted this endearing quality of his Father.

⁶ As mentioned in the preceding article, Jesus used a parable about a lost son to paint a heartwarming picture of

how much Jehovah loves to show mercy. The son had left home and “squandered his property by living a debauched life.” (Luke 15:13) Later, he repented of his immoral course, humbled himself, and returned home. How did his father respond? The young man did not have to wait long to find out. Jesus said: “While [the son] was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was moved with pity, and he ran and embraced him and tenderly kissed him.” The older man did not humiliate his son. Rather, he mercifully forgave the young man and welcomed him back to the family. The lost son had sinned greatly, but on the basis of his repentance, his father forgave him. The merciful father in the illustration represents Jehovah. In this touching way, Jesus illustrated his Father’s willingness to forgive sinners who sincerely repent.—Luke 15:17-24.

⁷ **Jehovah shows mercy because of his matchless wisdom.** Jehovah’s wisdom is not merely some cold, intellectual

5. How did Jesus learn about Jehovah’s mercy?

6. What picture did Jesus paint of his Father’s mercy?

7. How does Jehovah’s wisdom relate to the mercy he shows?

quality. Rather, the Bible says that “the *wisdom* from above” is “full of *mercy* and good fruits.” (Jas. 3:17) Like a loving parent, Jehovah knows that his mercy benefits his children. (Ps. 103:13; Isa. 49:15) Divine mercy gives them hope despite their imperfections. So Jehovah’s infinite wisdom moves him to extend mercy whenever he sees any basis for doing so. At the same time, Jehovah’s mercy is perfectly balanced. Wisely, he never crosses the line from mercy to permissiveness.

⁸ Suppose that a servant of God deliberately sets out to follow a course of sin. What then? “Stop keeping company with” him, Paul wrote under inspiration. (1 Cor. 5:11) Unrepentant wrongdoers are disfellowshipped from the congregation. That action is necessary in order to protect our faithful brothers and sisters and to reflect Jehovah’s holy ways. Some, though, may find it hard to view disfellowshipping as an expression of God’s mercy. Is it? Let us see.

CAN FIRM DISCIPLINE BE MERCIFUL?

⁹ When we hear an announcement made at a Christian meeting that someone we know and love “is no longer one of Jehovah’s Witnesses,” we are deeply saddened. We may wonder if it was necessary to disfellowship our loved one. **Is disfellowshipping really an expression of mercy? Yes, it is.** To withhold discipline from someone who needs it is not wise, merciful, or loving. (Prov. 13:24) **Can getting disfellowshipped help an un-**

repentant sinner change his course? It can. Many who have fallen into serious sin have found that the firm action the elders took gave them the very jolt they needed to come to their senses, change their course of action, and return to Jehovah’s warm embrace.—**Read Hebrews 12:5, 6.**

¹⁰ Consider an illustration. A shepherd notices that one of his sheep is ailing. He knows that treating this particular illness requires that he **isolate** the sick sheep from the rest of the flock. However, sheep are social creatures. They long to be with the flock, and they may become agitated when kept apart. Does this mean, though, that the shepherd is being harsh or cruel in choosing this treatment? Of course not. He knows that if he allows the sick sheep to mingle with the rest of the flock, the illness will spread. **By isolating the sick one, he protects the whole flock.**—Compare Leviticus 13:3, 4.

¹¹ When a Christian is disfellowshipped, we might think of him as being like that ailing sheep. He is sick in a spiritual sense. (Jas. 5:14) Spiritual sickness, like some forms of physical illness, can be quite contagious. **So it is necessary in some cases to isolate a spiritually sick individual from the congregation.** This discipline is an expression of Jehovah’s love for faithful members of His flock, and it may reach the wrongdoer’s heart and lead him to repentance. While disfellowshipped, the individual **may** be able to attend meetings, where he can be fed and built up spiritually. He is also free

8. What action is necessary at times, and why?

9-10. In line with Hebrews 12:5, 6, why can we say that disfellowshipping is a merciful provision? Illustrate.

11. (a) In what ways might a disfellowshipped person be compared to an ailing sheep? (b) What provisions and help are available to disfellowshipped ones?

to receive literature for his personal use and to watch JW Broadcasting®. And as the elders observe his progress, they may from time to time offer personal counsel and direction to help him regain his spiritual health so that he can be reinstated as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.*

¹² It is important to remember that **only unrepentant sinners are disfellowshipped.** The elders know that this is a serious matter, one that they do not take lightly. They know that Jehovah disciplines “to the proper degree.” (Jer. 30:11) They love their brothers, and they do not want to do anything that will cause them spiritual harm. At times, though, the loving and merciful thing to do is to remove a wrongdoer from the congregation for a period of time.

¹³ Consider how the apostle Paul dealt

* To learn how reinstated ones can restore their relationship with God and how the elders can help them, see the article “Rebuilding Your Friendship With Jehovah” in this issue.

12. What is the loving and merciful thing that elders can do for an unrepentant sinner?

13. Why did a Christian in Corinth need to be disfellowshipped?

with an unrepentant sinner in the first century. A Christian in Corinth was living immorally with his father’s wife. How shocking! In this regard, Jehovah had told the ancient Israelites: “A man who lies down with his father’s wife has exposed his father to shame. Both of them should be put to death without fail.” (Lev. 20:11) Of course, Paul could not order the death penalty for the man. But he did direct the Corinthians to disfellowship him. That man’s immoral conduct was affecting others in the congregation, some of whom were not even ashamed of his outrageous behavior!—1 Cor. 5:1, 2, 13.

¹⁴ Sometime later, Paul learned that real changes had taken place. The sinner was truly repentant! Although the man had brought shame on the congregation, Paul told the elders that he did not want “to be too harsh.” He directed them: “Kindly forgive and comfort him.” Note Paul’s reason: “So that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sadness.”

14. How did Paul show mercy toward the disfellowshipped man in Corinth, and why? (2 Corinthians 2:5-8, 11)



A sheep may be isolated when it is ailing, but it still benefits from the shepherd’s care
(See paragraphs 9-11)



King David showed a merciless spirit when approached by Nathan
(See paragraphs 19-20)

Paul felt pity for the repentant man. The apostle did not want to see the man so overwhelmed, so crushed, by what he did that he would give up on seeking forgiveness.—**Read 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, 11.**

¹⁵ In imitation of Jehovah, the elders love to show mercy. They show firmness when *necessary* but mercy when *possible* if there is a real basis for it. Otherwise, it is not mercy but permissiveness. Are elders the only ones, though, who need to show mercy?

WHAT CAN HELP ALL OF US TO SHOW MERCY?

¹⁶ All Christians seek to imitate Jehovah's mercy. Why? One reason is that Jehovah will not listen to those who fail to show mercy to others. (**Read Proverbs 21:13.**) None of us would want Jehovah to refuse to listen to our prayers, so we carefully avoid developing a hard-hearted spirit. Rather than turn a deaf ear to a fellow Christian in pain, we must always be ready to listen to "the

cry of the lowly one." Similarly, we take to heart this inspired counsel: "The one who does not practice mercy will have his judgment without mercy." (Jas. 2:13) If we humbly remember how much we *need* mercy, we are more likely to *show* mercy. We especially want to show mercy when a repentant wrongdoer returns to the congregation.

¹⁷ Bible examples can help us to embrace mercy and to avoid harshness. For instance, consider King David. He often showed heartfelt mercy. Though Saul wanted to kill him, David was merciful toward God's anointed king, never vengeful or vindictive.—1 Sam. 24:9-12, 18, 19.

¹⁸ However, David was not always merciful. For example, when Nabal, a harsh man by nature, spoke disrespectfully and refused to provide David and his men with food, David was enraged and decided to kill the man and all the men in his household. Thanks to quick action on the part of Nabal's long-suffering wife, Abigail, David avoided incurring bloodguilt.—1 Sam. 25:9-22, 32-35.

¹⁹ On another occasion, the prophet Nathan told David about a rich man who robbed a poor neighbor of a beloved sheep. Enraged, David responded: "As surely as Jehovah is living, the man who did this deserves to die!" (2 Sam. 12:1-6) Now, David knew the Mosaic Law. A thief who stole a sheep was to make compensation for it, four times over. (Ex. 22:1) But a death sentence? That was a harsh judgment. It turned out that Nathan was using that hypothetical case only as an il-

15. How do elders balance firmness with mercy?

16. According to Proverbs 21:13, how does Jehovah respond to those who fail to show mercy?

17. How did King David show heartfelt mercy?

18-19. What are two instances when David showed a merciless spirit?

illustration for a far worse series of crimes—those that David himself had committed! And Jehovah proved to be far more merciful toward David than David would have been toward the sheep stealer in Nathan’s illustration!—2 Sam. 12:7-13.

²⁰ Note that when David gave in to his rage, he judged Nabal and all his men as deserving of death. And later, David was ready to judge the man in Nathan’s illustration as worthy of death. In this second instance, we might wonder why a normally warmhearted man would pronounce such a harsh judgment. Consider the context. At the time, David had a guilty conscience. A harsh, judgmental spirit is not a sign of good spiritual health. Quite the opposite, in fact. Jesus strongly warned his followers: “Stop judging that you may not be judged; for with the judgment you are judging, you will be judged.” (Matt. 7:1, 2) So let us keep on guard against harshness and strive to be “rich in mercy,” like our God.

²¹ Mercy is more than just a feeling. In

20. What can we learn from David’s example?

21-22. What are some practical ways in which we can show mercy?

fact, mercy has been defined as “compassion in action.” All of us, then, can look carefully at the needs in our family, our congregation, and our community. Surely there are many opportunities to show mercy! Is someone in need of comfort? Can we offer practical help, perhaps providing some food or doing some thoughtful deed? Might a reinstated Christian need some comforting, upbuilding association? Can we share the comforting message of the good news with others? This is one of the best ways to show mercy to everyone we meet.—Job 29:12, 13; Rom. 10:14, 15; Jas. 1:27.

²² If we are alert to such needs, we will see that there are opportunities all around us to show mercy. When we show mercy, how we must delight our heavenly Father, the God who is “rich in mercy”!

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 9:** From the roof of his house, the father sees his wayward son returning home and rushes out to embrace him.

Page 12: Stressed by guilt, King David overreacts to Nathan’s illustration and angrily says that the rich man deserves to die.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| ■ Why does Jehovah show mercy? | ■ What shows that even firm discipline can be merciful? | ■ What will help us to be merciful? |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|

Rebuilding Your Friendship With Jehovah

EACH year, many precious sheep are reinstated in the Christian congregation. Imagine the great “joy in heaven” when each one returns! (Luke 15:7, 10) If you have been reinstated, you can be sure that Jesus, the angels, and Jehovah himself are delighted to see you take a stand for the truth again. Yet, as you rebuild your friendship with Jehovah, you may face challenges. What are some of them, and what can help you?

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Many battle negative feelings after returning to the congregation. Perhaps you understand how King David felt. Even after being forgiven for his sins, he said: “My errors overwhelm me.” (Ps. 40:12; 65:3) After someone returns to Jehovah, feelings of guilt or shame may linger for years. Isabelle

was disfellowshipped for over 20 years.* She said, “I found it very hard to accept the idea that Jehovah could forgive me.” If you get discouraged, you could again become spiritually weak. (Prov. 24:10) Try not to let that happen to you.

Others feel intimidated by the work involved in restoring their relationship with Jehovah. After reinstatement, Antoine said, “I felt that I had forgotten everything about my former life as a Christian.” Because of such feelings, some might hesitate to get fully involved in spiritual activities.

To illustrate, someone whose cherished home has been badly damaged by a hurricane may feel overwhelmed when he contemplates the time and effort needed to rebuild

* Names in this article have been changed.



it. Similarly, if your friendship with Jehovah was damaged by serious sin, you may feel that your spiritual restoration will require enormous effort. But help is available.

Jehovah invites us: “Come, now, and let us set matters straight between us.” (Isa. 1:18) You have already worked hard to “set matters straight.” Jehovah loves you for making that effort. Just think: You have given Jehovah a basis for him to make a powerful reply to Satan’s accusations!—Prov. 27:11.

By doing this, you have already drawn closer to Jehovah, and he promises to reciprocate. (Jas. 4:8) However, more is involved than being recognized by others as someone who is again part of the congregation. You need to keep strengthening your love for your Father and Friend, Jehovah. How can you do this?

SET REASONABLE GOALS AS YOU REBUILD

Try setting reasonable goals. Remember that your spiritual foundation—your knowledge about Jehovah and his promises for the future—likely remains intact. But you need to rebuild a structure of Christian living, and this includes preaching the good news and associating frequently with your brothers and sisters. Consider the following goals.

Talk to Jehovah often. Your Father understands that persistent feelings of guilt can make it difficult for you to pray to him. (Rom. 8:26) Nevertheless, “persevere in prayer,” telling Jehovah how much you want his friendship. (Rom. 12:12) Andrej remembers: “I felt tremendous guilt and shame. But after each prayer, those feelings lessened. I felt more peace of mind.” If you do not know what to pray for, consider the prayers of repentant King David that are recorded in Psalms 51 and 65.

Study the Bible regularly. This will nourish you spiritually and help your love for

Jehovah to grow. (Ps. 19:7-11) “Not having a spiritual routine in the first place was the reason I became weak and let Jehovah down,” said Felipe. “I didn’t want to make the same mistake twice, so I decided to make personal study my protection.” You can do the same. If you need guidance to identify suitable topics for your personal study, why not ask a mature friend for help?

Rebuild your friendship with your brothers and sisters. Some who return to the congregation worry that others will view them negatively. Larissa admitted: “I was very ashamed. I felt that I had betrayed the congregation. These feelings stayed with me for a long time.” Be assured that the elders and other mature ones are eager to help you as you rebuild your spirituality. (See the box “What Can Elders Do?”) They are delighted that you have returned, and they want you to do well!—Prov. 17:17.

What can draw you closer to the congregation? Get fully involved in what the brothers and sisters are doing—attending meetings and sharing regularly in field service. How will this help? Felix said: “The congregation was looking forward to my return. I felt valued. They all helped me to be part of a family again, to feel forgiven, and to move forward.”—See the box “What Can You Do?”

DO NOT GIVE UP!

Satan will continue to send your way more “hurricanes” to try to weaken you as you rebuild your friendship with Jehovah. (Luke 4:13) Be ready by strengthening your spiritual house now.

Regarding his sheep, Jehovah promises: “The lost one I will search for, the stray I will bring back, the injured I will bandage, and the weak I will strengthen.” (Ezek. 34:16) Jehovah has helped countless others who have experienced spiritual setbacks. Be assured that he wants to help you to keep building an ever stronger relationship with him.

What Can You Do?

Rebuild the spiritual structure of your life

TALK TO JEHOVAH OFTEN

Tell Jehovah how much you want his friendship. The elders will pray for you and with you



STUDY THE BIBLE REGULARLY

Nourish yourself spiritually, and this will help your love for Jehovah to grow



REBUILD YOUR FRIENDSHIPS

Get fully involved with the congregation, at the meetings and in the ministry



What Can Elders Do?

The elders play a key role in helping reinstated publishers rebuild their relationship with Jehovah. Note what they can do for reinstated ones.

Reassure them. The apostle Paul knew that a repentant sinner could be “overwhelmed by excessive sadness.” (2 Cor. 2:7) He may be susceptible to feelings of shame and despair. Paul counseled the congregation: “Kindly forgive and comfort him.” Reinstated ones need to be reassured that Jehovah and their fellow believers love them dearly. Ongoing commendation and practical help may prevent them from becoming discouraged.

Pray with them. “A righteous man’s supplication has a powerful effect.” (Jas. 5:16) Larissa, quoted earlier, says: “I told the elders about my doubts and fears. They prayed in my behalf. Then I understood that the elders were not angry with me. They wanted to help me restore my relationship with Jehovah.” Theo says: “The elders’ prayers gave me confidence that Jehovah truly loves me and sees the good in me, not only the bad.”

Befriend them. Reinstated ones need friends in the congregation. “Seize any opportunity to invite them to work with you in the ministry and, most important, to visit them in their homes. Friendship is absolutely critical!” says an elder named Justin. Another elder, Henry, says, “If others in the congregation see the elders making friends with the reinstated one, they will try to do the same.”

Help them study. A mature friend can help a reinstated one establish a good study routine. An elder named Darko says: “I love to share spiritual gems that I have found in my personal study and to convey my enthusiasm for Bible study. I also arrange to study



some material together.” Another elder, Clayton, says: “I encourage them to find Bible accounts that closely mirror what they have been through.”

Shepherd them. Reinstated ones have seen the elders in the role of judges. Now, more than ever, they need to see them as shepherds. (Jer. 23:4) Be quick to listen and ready to commend. Make contact frequently. Note what an elder named Marcus does on shepherding visits: “We share a Scriptural thought, commend them, and assure them that we are proud of them for working so hard to come back and that Jehovah is too. At the end of each visit, we set a date for the next one.”

SONG 142

Holding Fast to Our Hope

PREVIEW

In this article, we will look at the pattern of true worship set by Jesus and examine how his early disciples followed it. We will also provide evidence that Jehovah's Witnesses are following that pattern of true worship today.

Hold Fast to the Truth With Strong Conviction

“Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine.”

—1 THESS. 5:21.

THERE may be tens of thousands of so-called Christian denominations that claim to worship God acceptably. No wonder many people are confused! They ask, “Is there one true religion, or do all religions please God?” Are we strongly convinced in our own mind that what we are teaching is the truth and that the pattern of worship that Jehovah's Witnesses are following today is the one that is acceptable to Jehovah? Is it really possible to have such conviction? Let us consider the evidence.

² The apostle Paul was strongly convinced of the truth. **(Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5.)** That conviction was not based on emotion. Paul was a diligent student of God's Word. He believed that “all Scripture is inspired of God.” (2 Tim. 3:16) What did his studies reveal? In the Scriptures, Paul found undeniable proof that Jesus was the promised Messiah—evidence that the Jewish religious leaders chose to ignore. Those religious hypocrites claimed to represent God but denied him by their works. (Titus 1:16) Unlike them, Paul did not pick and choose which parts of God's Word he would believe. He was ready to teach and apply “all the counsel of God.”—Acts 20:27.

³ Some feel that the true religion should be able to

1. Why are many people confused?
2. According to 1 Thessalonians 1:5, why was the apostle Paul convinced of the truth?
3. To have strong conviction, must we have the answers to *all* our questions? (See also the box “Jehovah's Works and Thoughts—Too Numerous to Recount.”)

answer every question, even questions that are not specifically addressed in the Bible. Is that a realistic expectation? Consider Paul's example. He encouraged fellow believers to "make sure of all things," but he also admitted that there were many things he did not understand. (1 Thess. 5:21) "We have partial knowledge," he wrote, adding, "we see in hazy outline by means of a metal mirror." (1 Cor. 13:9, 12) Paul did not understand everything; nor do we. But Paul did see the general outline of Jehovah's purposes. He knew enough to be convinced that he had the truth!

⁴ One way we can strengthen our conviction that we have found the truth is by comparing the pattern of worship set by Jesus with what Jehovah's Witnesses are doing today. In this article, we will see that true Christians (1) reject idolatry, (2) respect Jehovah's name, (3) love the truth, and (4) love one another intensely.

WE REJECT IDOLATRY

⁵ Moved by his deep love for God, Jesus worshipped Jehovah exclusively, both when he was in heaven and when he was on earth. (Luke 4:8) He taught his disciples to do likewise. Neither Jesus nor his faithful disciples ever used images in worship. Since God is a Spirit, nothing that man could possibly conceive could even come close to representing Jehovah's glory! (Isa. 46:5)

4. How can we strengthen our conviction that we have found the truth, and what will we consider about true Christians?

5. What do we learn from Jesus about the proper way to worship God, and how can we apply what he taught?

Jehovah's Works and Thoughts—"Too Numerous to Recount"

To have strong conviction that we have the truth, must we have the answers to *all* our questions now or do we have to be able to answer every question that is asked of us? No. As shown by the following scriptures, we will never know all there is to know about Jehovah's works and thoughts. We will continue to learn about our God on into eternity. In the meantime, Jehovah has revealed enough about himself and his purposes to allow us to build strong faith in him and to explain to others the primary teachings of his Word.

- Psalm 40:5: "How many things you have done, O Jehovah my God, your wonderful works and your thoughts toward us. None can compare to you; if I were to try to tell and speak of them, they would be too numerous to recount!"
- Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has even put eternity in their heart; yet mankind will never find out the work that the true God has made from start to finish."
- Isaiah 55:9: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."
- Romans 11:33: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and beyond tracing out his ways are!"

But what about making images of so-called saints and praying to them? In the second of the Ten Commandments, Jehovah said: “You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like **anything** that is in the heavens above or on the earth below . . . You must not bow down to them.” (Ex. 20:4, 5) Those words are clear to those who desire to please God.

⁶ Secular historians have acknowledged that the early Christians gave exclusive devotion to God. For instance, the book *History of the Christian Church* states that the early Christians “would have looked with horror” at the suggestion of having images in places of worship. Today, Jehovah’s Witnesses follow the pattern set by the first-century Christians. We do not pray to images of “saints” or angels; we do not even pray to Jesus. And we do not perform acts of worship to symbols of the State. Come what may, we are determined to obey Jesus’ words: “It is Jehovah your God you must worship.”—Matt. 4:10.

⁷ Today many follow charismatic church leaders. Enthusiasm for such men sometimes borders on idolatry. People pack their churches, buy their books, and donate heavily to the causes these leaders promote. Some individuals hang on to their every word. It is hard to imagine that these churchgoers could be more excited if Jesus himself were to appear to them! In contrast, true worshippers of Jehovah have no

clergy. Although we respect those who are taking the lead, we accept Jesus’ clear teaching: “All of you are brothers.” (Matt. 23:8-10) We do not idolize men, whether they are religious leaders or political rulers. And we do not support their causes. Rather, we remain neutral and separate from the world. In these areas, we stand out as different from the many groups of professed Christians.—John 18:36.

WE RESPECT JEHOVAH’S NAME

⁸ On one occasion, Jesus prayed: “Father, glorify your name.” Jehovah himself answered that prayer with a thunderous voice from heaven, promising that he would glorify his name. (John 12:28) Throughout his ministry, Jesus glorified his Father’s name. (John 17:26) So it is reasonable to expect that true Christians would be proud to use God’s name and to make it known to others.

⁹ In the first century C.E., shortly after the Christian congregation was established, Jehovah “turned his attention to the nations to take out of them a people for his name.” (Acts 15:14) Those first-century Christians were proud to use God’s name and to make it known to others. They used the divine name prominently in their ministry and in their writings.* They proved themselves to be a people for God’s name.—Acts 2:14, 21.

* See the box “Did the First Christians Use God’s Name?” in *The Watchtower*, July 1, 2010, p. 6.

6. What pattern of worship do Jehovah’s Witnesses follow today?

7. What clear distinctions exist between Jehovah’s Witnesses and other religions?

8. How do we know that Jehovah wants his name to be glorified and widely known?

9. How did the first-century Christians prove that they respected God’s name?



True Christians are proud
to tell others about Jehovah
(See paragraphs 8-10)

¹⁰ Are Jehovah's Witnesses a people for Jehovah's name? Consider the evidence. Today many religious leaders have done everything in their power to conceal the fact that God has a personal name. They have removed it from their Bible translations and, in some cases, have banned the use of that name in their religious services.* Can anyone deny that Jehovah's Witnesses are the only ones who give Jehovah's name the respect and honor it deserves? We are making God's personal name

* For example, in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI directed that God's name is "neither to be used [n]or pronounced" in Catholic religious services, hymns, or prayers.

10. What evidence is there that Jehovah's Witnesses are a people for Jehovah's name?

more widely known than any other religious group! In that regard, we are doing our very best to live up to our name, Jehovah's Witnesses. (Isa. 43:10-12) We have produced over 240 million copies of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, which uses Jehovah's name in places where it has been omitted by other Bible translators. And we produce Bible-based publications that promote Jehovah's name in more than 1,000 languages!

WE LOVE THE TRUTH

¹¹ Jesus loved the truth, that is, the truth about God and His purposes.

11. How did the early Christians manifest their love for truth?

Jesus lived in harmony with that truth, and he made that truth known to others. (John 18:37) Jesus' true followers also deeply loved the truth. (John 4:23, 24) In fact, the apostle Peter referred to Christianity as "the way of the truth." (2 Pet. 2:2) Because of their strong love for truth, the early Christians rejected religious ideas, cultural traditions, and personal opinions that were out of harmony with the truth. (Col. 2:8) Likewise today, true Christians strive to "go on walking in the truth" by strictly basing all their beliefs and their way of life on Jehovah's Word.—3 John 3, 4.

¹² God's people today do not claim to have perfect or complete knowledge of the truth. At times, they have made mistakes in doctrinal matters and in organizational direction. That should not surprise us. The Scriptures make it clear that accurate knowledge increases with time. (Col. 1:9, 10) Jehovah reveals the truth gradually, and we must be willing to wait patiently for the light of truth to get brighter. (Prov. 4:18) When those taking the lead realize that our understanding on a certain point of truth needs to be clarified, they do not hesitate to make the needed adjustments. While many denominations in Christendom make changes to please their congregations or to get closer to the world, the changes made by Jehovah's organization are designed to draw us closer to God and to the pattern of worship established by Jesus. (Jas. 4:4) The adjustments we make are driven, not by mod-

12. What happens when those taking the lead realize that our understanding needs to be clarified, and why do they take that action?

ern trends or popular demands, but by a clearer understanding of the Scriptures. We love the truth!—1 Thess. 2:3, 4.

WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER INTENSELY

¹³ Of all the qualities that defined the first-century Christian congregation, the most important was love. Jesus said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples—if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:34, 35) Today, Jehovah's Witnesses enjoy a loving unity on a global scale. Like no other organization, our close-knit brotherhood rises above national, racial, and social boundaries. We see evidence of genuine love at our meetings, assemblies, and conventions. That evidence strengthens our conviction that our form of worship is the one approved by Jehovah.

¹⁴ The Scriptures urge us to "have intense love for one another." (1 Pet. 4:8) One way we show such love is by forgiving one another and putting up with one another's imperfections. We also look for opportunities to be generous and hospitable to all in the congregation, even to those who may have offended us. **(Read Colossians 3:12-14.)** Such a loving bond is truly the foremost identifying mark of true Christians.

"ONE FAITH"

¹⁵ We follow the pattern of worship set

13. What is the most important quality shown by true Christians, and how is it evident among Jehovah's Witnesses today?

14. According to Colossians 3:12-14, what is an important way we can show intense love for one another?

15. In what other ways do we follow the pattern of worship set by the first-century Christians?

by the first-century Christian congregation in other ways as well. For instance, our organizational structure—which includes traveling overseers, elders, and ministerial servants—mirrors the arrangement established by the apostles in the first century. (Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5) Our view of sex and marriage, our respect for the sacredness of blood, and our desire to protect the congregation from unrepentant wrongdoers are all based on the pattern set in the first century.—Acts 15:28, 29; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 6:9, 10; Heb. 13:4.

¹⁶ Jesus said that many would claim to be his disciples but that not all would be genuine. (Matt. 7:21-23) The Scriptures also forewarned that in the last days, many would have only “an appearance of godliness.” (2 Tim. 3:1, 5) Yet, the Bible plainly tells us that there is “one

16. What do we learn from the statement found at Ephesians 4:4-6?

faith” that has God’s approval.—**Read Ephesians 4:4-6.**

¹⁷ Who are practicing the one true faith today? We have examined the evidence. We have looked at the pattern of worship taught by Jesus and practiced by the first-century Christians. There is only one answer—Jehovah’s Witnesses. What a privilege we have to be one of Jehovah’s people and to know the truth about Jehovah and his purposes! May we continue to hold fast to the truth with strong conviction.

17. Who today are following Jesus and practicing the one true faith?

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 21: Jehovah’s organization has released the *New World Translation* in over 200 languages so that people can read in their own tongue a Bible that features God’s name.

AS JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES, HOW DO WE SHOW THAT WE . . .

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| ■ worship Jehovah exclusively and respect his name? | ■ love the truth? | ■ love one another intensely? |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------------|

SONG 68

Sowing Kingdom Seed

PREVIEW

We are happy when people respond favorably to the good news, and we are disappointed when they fail to do so. What if a Bible student whom you are helping does not progress? Or what if you have never directly helped someone to the point of baptism? Should you conclude that you have failed at disciple-making? In this article, we will see why we can succeed in our ministry and find joy regardless of the response to our efforts.

Do Not Give Up!

“Let us not give up in doing what is fine.”—GAL. 6:9.

WHAT joy and honor we have as Jehovah’s Witnesses! We bear God’s name and live up to that name by sharing in the work of preaching and making disciples. We rejoice when we can help someone who is “rightly disposed for everlasting life” to become a believer. (Acts 13:48) We share the feelings of Jesus, who “became overjoyed in the holy spirit” when his disciples returned from a successful preaching campaign.—Luke 10:1, 17, 21.

² We take our ministry seriously. The apostle Paul urged Timothy: “Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching.” Paul added: “By doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.” (1 Tim. 4:16) So lives are at stake. We pay constant attention to ourselves because we are subjects of God’s Kingdom. We always want to act in a way that brings praise to Jehovah and is in harmony with the good news that we preach. (Phil. 1:27) We show that we are ‘paying attention to our teaching’ by preparing well for the ministry and by asking for Jehovah’s blessing before we witness to others.

³ Even when we do our utmost, though, we may find little or no positive response to the Kingdom message in our territory. Consider the experience of Brother Georg Lindal, who preached alone throughout Iceland from 1929 to 1947. He placed tens of thousands of publications; yet, not one person accepted the truth. He wrote: “Some seem to have taken their stand against the

1. What joy and honor do we have?
2. How can we show that we take our ministry seriously?
3. What response might we find to the Kingdom message? Give an example.



Jehovah values our efforts, whether we preach in person, by letter, or over the phone (See paragraph 6)

truth, but the majority remain entirely indifferent.” Even after Gilead-trained missionaries arrived and expanded the work, another nine years passed before some Icelanders dedicated themselves to Jehovah and got baptized.*

⁴ We are disappointed when people do not respond favorably. We might feel as did Paul, who experienced “great grief and unceasing pain” because the Jews as a whole refused to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah. (Rom. 9:1-3) What if in spite of your earnest efforts and prayers in his behalf, a Bible student fails to make progress and the study needs to be discontinued? Or what if you have never directly helped someone to the point of baptism? Should you feel guilty, perhaps thinking that Jehovah has not blessed your ministry? In this article, we will answer two questions: (1) What marks a successful ministry? (2) What realistic expectations should we have?

WHAT MARKS A SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY?

⁵ The Bible says of the person who does God’s will: “Everything he does

* See the 2005 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses, pp. 205-211.

4. How might we feel when people do not respond favorably to the good news?

5. Why may our work for Jehovah not always produce the outcome we had hoped for?

will succeed.” (Ps. 1:3) However, that does not mean that everything we do for Jehovah will turn out as we wish. Human life is “filled with trouble” because of imperfection—both ours and that of others. (Job 14:1) Further, opposers may temporarily succeed in interfering with our efforts to carry out our ministry in the usual way. (1 Cor. 16:9; 1 Thess. 2:18) How, then, does Jehovah measure our success? Consider some Bible principles that help to answer this question.

⁶ ***Jehovah looks at our efforts and endurance.*** In Jehovah’s eyes, our work for him is successful when we carry it out with diligence and love, regardless of how others respond. Paul wrote: “God is not unrighteous so as to forget ***your work*** and ***the love you showed for his name*** by ministering and continuing to minister to the holy ones.” (Heb. 6:10) Jehovah remembers our efforts and our love, even if those efforts do not lead to positive results. Thus, you may apply to yourself what Paul told the Corinthians: “***Your labor*** is not in vain in connection with the Lord,” regardless of whether that labor produced the outcome you had hoped for.—1 Cor. 15:58.

6. How does Jehovah measure the success of our work for him?

⁷ The apostle Paul was an outstanding missionary, forming new congregations in multiple cities. Yet, when he felt he needed to defend his qualifications as a minister of Christ, he did not emphasize the number of people he had helped to become believers. Rather, refuting the claims of those who sought to exalt themselves over him, Paul wrote: “I have done more *work*.” (2 Cor. 11:23) Like Paul, remember that efforts and endurance are what Jehovah values most.

⁸ *Our ministry pleases Jehovah.* Jesus sent out 70 disciples to preach the Kingdom message, and at the end of their witnessing campaign, they “returned with joy.” What was the source of their joy? They said: “Even the demons are made subject to us by the use of your name.” However, Jesus corrected their thinking when he told them: “Do not rejoice because the spirits are made subject to you, but rejoice because your names have been written in the heavens.” (Luke 10:17-20) Jesus knew that they would not always have such outstanding experiences in their ministry. In fact, we do not know how many of those who initially listened to the disciples became believers. The disciples needed to find joy not just through their accomplishments but, more important, from knowing that Jehovah was pleased with their diligent efforts.

⁹ *If we endure in our ministry, we will gain everlasting life.* As we wholeheart-

edly sow and cultivate seeds of Kingdom truth, we are also “sowing with a view to the spirit” by allowing God’s holy spirit to operate freely in our life. As long as we do not “give up” or “tire out,” Jehovah guarantees that we will reap everlasting life, regardless of whether we help a new disciple to dedicate himself to God.—**Read Galatians 6:7-9.**

WHAT REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS SHOULD WE HAVE?

¹⁰ *The response depends primarily on the heart condition of our listeners.* Jesus explained this truth in his illustration of the sower who cast seed on different types of soil, only one of which produced fruitage. (Luke 8:5-8) Jesus said that the various soils represent people whose hearts respond in different ways to “the word of God.” (Luke 8:11-15) Like the sower, we cannot control the fruitage of our work, since it depends on the heart condition of our listeners. Our responsibility is to keep sowing the fine seed of the Kingdom message. As the apostle Paul put it, “each person will receive his own reward according to his own *work*,” not according to the *results* of his work.—1 Cor. 3:8.

¹¹ Early witnesses of Jehovah faced unresponsive listeners. For example, Noah was “a preacher of righteousness,” likely for decades. (2 Pet. 2:5) No doubt, he hoped that others would respond favorably to his preaching, but Jehovah gave no such indication. Rather, when

7. What can we learn from the way the apostle Paul described his ministry?

8. What should we remember about our ministry?

9. According to Galatians 6:7-9, what will be the outcome for us if we endure in our ministry?

10. What determines people’s response to our ministry?

11. Why was Noah successful as “a preacher of righteousness”? (See cover picture.)

instructing Noah to build the ark, God said: “You must go into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.” (Gen. 6:18) And considering the dimensions and capacity of the ark that God told him to build, Noah may have realized that any response to his preaching would be limited. (Gen. 6:15) As matters turned out, not one person from that violent world responded to Noah’s preaching. (Gen. 7:7) Did Jehovah view Noah as a failure? Not at all! In God’s eyes, Noah was a successful preacher because he faithfully did what Jehovah had asked him to do.—Gen. 6:22.

¹² The prophet Jeremiah likewise preached for decades in the face of apathy and opposition. He became so discouraged by the “insults and jeering” of opposers that he thought of giving up his assignment. (Jer. 20:8, 9) But Jeremiah did not give up! What enabled him to overcome his negative thoughts and find joy in his ministry? He focused on two important facts. First, God’s message that Jeremiah took to the people involved “a future and a hope.” (Jer. 29:11) Second, Jehovah had placed his name on Jeremiah. (Jer. 15:16) We too bring a message of hope in a bleak world, and we bear Jehovah’s name as his Witnesses. When we focus our attention on these two important facts, we can find joy regardless of the response of the people.

¹³ *Spiritual growth occurs gradually.*

12. How did the prophet Jeremiah find joy in his ministry in the face of apathy and opposition?

13. What do we learn from Jesus’ illustration recorded at Mark 4:26-29?

Jesus taught this truth in his illustration of the sower who sleeps. **(Read Mark 4:26-29.)** The fruitage of the sower’s efforts came gradually and was largely out of his control. You too may not see results from your disciple-making for some time because the growth takes place gradually and in stages. Just as a farmer cannot force his crops to grow at the pace he desires, we cannot force our Bible students to make spiritual progress at the rate we would like to see. So do not get discouraged or give up if their progress is taking longer than you expected. Like farming, making disciples requires patience.—Jas. 5:7, 8.

¹⁴ In some territories, the results of our ministry might not be evident for years. Consider the experience of Gladys and Ruby Allen, fleshly sisters who in 1959 were assigned as regular pioneers to a town in the Canadian province of Quebec.* Because of community pressure and the influence of the Catholic church, people were unwilling to hear the Kingdom message. Gladys recalled: “We went from door to door eight hours a day for two years without getting anyone to answer! The people simply came to the door and pulled the blinds down. But we didn’t give up.” In time, the people’s attitude softened and the territory became more productive. There are now three congregations in that town.—Isa. 60:22.

* See Gladys Allen’s life story, “I Would Not Change a Thing!,” in the September 1, 2002, issue of *The Watchtower*.

14. What example shows that the results of our ministry might occur gradually?

¹⁵ ***Disciple-making is a collective effort.***

It has been said that it takes a congregation to help someone to the point of baptism. **(Read 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.)** A publisher leaves a tract or a magazine with an interested person. The brother then finds that his personal schedule will not allow him to return to further the interest, so he asks another publisher to make a return visit. That publisher is able to start a Bible study. He, in turn, invites a number of brothers and sisters to attend the study, and each one encourages the student in a different way. Every brother or sister whom the student meets will help to water the seed of truth. In that way, as Jesus said, the sower and the reaper may rejoice together in the spiritual harvest.—John 4:35-38.

¹⁶ What if your share in preaching and teaching the good news is limited by your failing health or stamina? You can

15. What does 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7 teach us about the disciple-making work?

16. Why can you find joy in your ministry even if you are limited by failing health or stamina?

still find joy in your role in the harvest. Consider the experience of King David when he and his men rescued their families and belongings from marauding Amalekites. Two hundred of the men were too exhausted to fight, so they stayed behind to guard the baggage. After the battle was won, David ordered that the spoil be shared equally by all of them. (1 Sam. 30:21-25) It is similar with our worldwide disciple-making work. Everyone who does his best can share equally in the joy over each new one who is rescued and helped to start on the road to life.

¹⁷ We thank Jehovah for the loving way in which he views our service to him. He knows that we cannot control the outcome of our personal efforts. Even so, he notices our diligence and good motives, and he rewards us. He also teaches us how to find joy in the part we play in the great harvest. (John 14:12) We can be assured of God's approval as long as we do not give up!

17. For what should we thank Jehovah?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| ■ How might we feel when people do not respond favorably to our ministry? | ■ What makes our ministry successful? | ■ Why should we not focus on how many people we have personally helped into the truth? |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|

1921

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

“WHAT, therefore, is the particular work that we can see immediately before us for the year?” The *Watch Tower* of January 1, 1921, posed this question to eager Bible Students. In answer, it quoted Isaiah 61:1, 2, which reminded them of their commission to preach. “Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek . . . , to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.”

FEARLESS PREACHERS

To fulfill their commission, the Bible Students would need to be fearless. They would need to proclaim “good tidings” to the meek as well as “the day of vengeance” to the wicked.

Brother J. H. Hoskin, who lived in Canada, witnessed fearlessly despite opposition. In the spring of 1921, he encountered a Methodist minister. Brother Hoskin began the conversation by saying: “We should talk agreeably on the Scriptures, and even if we differ on some things, we can agree to disagree and part as friends.” But that did not happen. Brother Hoskin recounted: “We had talked only a few minutes when [the minister] struck the door so

hard that I thought its large glass would fall to the floor.”

“Why don’t you go to the heathen and talk to them?” the minister shouted. Brother Hoskin held his tongue, but as he left, he thought to himself, ‘I felt that I was talking to one!’

When the minister delivered his sermon the next day, the attack continued. “He warned his flock of me, telling the people that I was the worst fraud that ever struck that town and that I ought to be shot,” Brother Hoskin recalled. Not deterred in the least, he continued preaching and had good success. He said: “I never had a more glorious time canvassing. Some of the people even exclaimed, ‘I know that you are a man of God!’ and asked if they could help me so that I might not want for anything.”

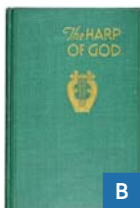
PERSONAL AND FAMILY STUDY

To help interested ones to progress, the Bible Students published Bible study programs in *The Golden Age*.^{*} The Juvenile Bible Study program consisted of questions for parents to consider with their children. Parents were to “propound these questions to their children and aid them to locate in the Bible the answer.” Some questions, such as “How many books are in the Bible?” taught basic facts. Others, such as “Should

^{*} *The Golden Age* was renamed *Consolation* in 1937 and *Awake!* in 1946.



A



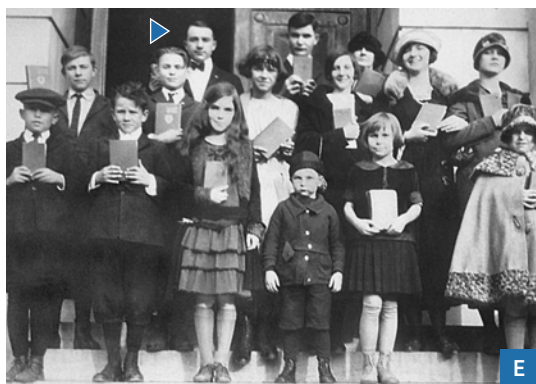
B



C



D



E

A. Thayne Gardner in her wheelchair

B. The book *The Harp of God*

C. Bookmark with a reading assignment

D. Self-quizz cards

E. Using *The Harp of God*, Arthur Claus taught a study class of 14 children

every true Christian expect persecution in some form?," prepared young ones to be fearless preachers.

The program Advanced Studies in the Divine Plan of the Ages provided mature Bible Students with thought-provoking questions based on the first volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*. Thousands of readers benefited from these programs, but *The Golden Age* of December 21, 1921, announced that both programs would be discontinued. Why the sudden change?

A NEW BOOK!

Those taking the lead realized that new Bible students needed to learn basic truths in a systematic way. To that end, the book *The Harp of God* was released in November 1921. Interested ones who accepted the book were also enrolled in The Harp Bible Study Course. This self-study course helped readers discern "God's plan for blessing mankind with everlasting life." How did this course work?

When a person accepted a copy of the book, he received a reading assignment printed on a small card. The next week, he received a card with a series of questions based on that assignment. The card ended with a reading assignment for the following week.

Each week for 12 weeks, the student received a new card mailed by the local class, or congregation. Often the cards were sent out by those in the congregation who were elderly or who had limiting circumstances. For example, Anna K. Gardner, from Millvale, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., recalled: "When *The Harp of God* was released, it gave Thayne, my invalid sister, more work she could do, sending out the weekly cards of questions." When the course was completed, the student received a personal visit to help him further his Bible education.

THE WORK AHEAD

At year's end, Brother J. F. Rutherford sent a letter to all the classes. He noted that "the witness for the Kingdom given this year has been wider and more effective than that given during any year of the harvest period." Looking forward, he added: "Much work remains to be done. Encourage others to join in this blessed service." The Bible Students evidently heeded this advice. The year 1922 would see them fearlessly advertising the Kingdom in an extraordinary way.

Fearless Friends

The Bible Students showed brotherly love by helping one another. They were fearless friends “born for times of distress,” as the following account shows.—Prov. 17:17.

On Tuesday, May 31, 1921, what came to be called the Tulsa Race Massacre erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, U.S.A., after a black man was jailed and charged with assaulting a white woman. When a mob of more than 1,000 white men clashed with a smaller group of black men, the fighting spread quickly to the black neighborhood of Greenwood, where more than 1,400 homes and businesses were looted and burned. The official death toll was 36, but the actual number may have been in the hundreds.

Brother Richard J. Hill, a black Bible Student and resident of Greenwood, related what happened: “On the night of the riot, we had our Bible study class as usual. After the class was over, we heard shooting downtown. We went to bed listening to it.” By Wednesday morning, June 1, the situation had worsened. “Some folks came and stated that if we wanted protection, we had better go to Convention Hall at once.” So Brother Hill along with his wife and five children fled to Tulsa’s Convention Hall. There, an estimated 3,000 black men and women were housed by the National Guard, who had been called in to restore order.

About the same time, Brother Arthur Claus, who was white, made a courageous decision. “When I heard that rioting squads were running about throughout Greenwood, looting and setting fire to homes, I decided to check on my dear friend, Brother Hill.”

Arriving at Brother Hill’s home, he encountered a white neighbor holding a rifle. The neighbor, also a friend of Brother Hill’s, assumed that Arthur was one of the rioters. “Why are you in this man’s yard?” he shouted.

“Had I given him an unsatisfactory answer, he would have shot me,” Arthur recalled. “I assured him that I was Brother Hill’s friend and that I had been to his home many times.” Arthur and the neighbor successfully protected the property against the looters.

Soon Arthur discovered that Brother Hill and his family were at Convention Hall. Arthur was told that black people could not leave there without an order signed by General Barrett, the officer in charge. Arthur related: “It was a real task to get to see the general. When I told him my plans, he asked: ‘Will you watch over this family and take care of their needs?’ Naturally, I heartily agreed.”

With the order in hand, Arthur rushed to Convention Hall. He presented it to an officer who exclaimed: “Why, this is signed by the general himself! Do you know that you are the first person to take anyone from this place all day?” Brother Hill and his family were soon located. All of them crowded into Arthur’s car and headed home.

“All of us stood equal among
God’s dedicated people”

Brother Claus made sure that Brother Hill and his family were safe. His example of fearless brotherhood had a good effect on others. Arthur related: “The neighbor who helped protect the Hill’s property drew closer to the truth. And a number of people got interested in the Kingdom because they saw that there were no racial barriers, that all of us stood equal among God’s dedicated people.”

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COVER PICTURE:

Although Noah preached faithfully for many years, no one joined him in the ark except for his immediate family. Even so, Noah was successful in obeying God! (See study article 43, paragraph 11)

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