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SONG 45

The Meditation
of My Heart

PREVIEW

We want our prayers to be like heartfelt letters to a dear friend. Yet, it is not always easy to buy out the time to pray. And it can be a challenge to know what to pray for. This article will discuss both of these important topics.

Improving the Quality of Our Prayers

“Pour out your hearts before him.”—PS. 62:8.

WHOM can we turn to when we need comfort and guidance? We know the answer to that question. We can approach Jehovah God in prayer. Jehovah invites us to do just that. He wants us to pray often—to “pray constantly.” (1 Thess. 5:17) We can freely approach him in prayer and seek his guidance in all aspects of our life. (Prov. 3: 5, 6) Being the generous God he is, Jehovah places no limit on the number of times we can pray to him.

² We treasure the gift of prayer. Yet, with all we have to do, we may struggle to find the time to pray. We may also feel the need to improve the quality of our prayers. Thankfully, we can find much encouragement and guidance in the Scriptures. In this article, we will consider how we can set aside time to pray by examining Jesus’ example. We will also discuss how we can improve the quality of our prayers by including five important subjects.

JESUS SET ASIDE TIME TO PRAY

³ Jesus understood that Jehovah values prayer. Long before coming to earth, he saw his Father answer the prayers of faithful men and women. For example, Jesus was at his Father’s side when He answered the sincere

1. What does Jehovah invite his worshippers to do? (See also picture.)
2. What will we consider in this article?
3. What did Jesus understand about prayer?



We can approach Jehovah in prayer regularly and seek his guidance in all aspects of our life
(See paragraph 1)

prayers of Hannah, David, and Elijah, to name a few. (1 Sam. 1:10, 11, 20; 1 Ki. 19: 4-6; Ps. 32:5) No wonder Jesus taught his disciples to pray often and with confidence!—Matt. 7:7-11.

⁴ By means of his own prayers to Jehovah, Jesus set an example for his disciples to follow. Throughout his ministry, Jesus prayed frequently. He had to set aside time to pray because he was often busy and surrounded by many people. (Mark 6:31, 45, 46) He got up early in the morning so that he could have time alone to pray. (Mark 1:35) On at least one occasion, he prayed all night before making an important decision. (Luke 6:12, 13) And Jesus prayed repeatedly on the night before he died as he focused on completing the most challenging aspect of his earthly assignment.—Matt. 26:39, 42, 44.

⁵ Jesus' example teaches us that no matter how busy we are, we need to set aside time to pray. Like Jesus, we

may need to reserve time for prayer—getting up early in the morning or staying up a little later in the evening. When we do, we show Jehovah that we appreciate this special gift. A sister named Lynne remembers how moved she was when she first learned about the privilege of prayer. She recalls, “When I learned that I could talk to Jehovah anytime, it helped me to view him as my close Friend and to want to improve my prayers.” No doubt many of us feel the same way. So let us consider five key subjects we can include in our prayers.

FIVE IMPORTANT SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER

⁶ **Praise Jehovah.** In an awe-inspiring vision, the apostle John saw 24 elders in the heavens worshipping Jehovah. They praised God, acknowledging that he is worthy to receive “the glory and the honor and the power.” (**Read Revelation 4:10, 11.**) Faithful angels also have a multitude of reasons to praise and

4. What do we learn from Jesus' prayers?

5. How can we imitate Jesus when we pray?

6. According to Revelation 4:10, 11, what is Jehovah worthy to receive?



him for any good thing that we have; after all, every good gift comes from him. (Jas. 1:17) For example, we can express our appreciation for the beauty of the earth and the marvels of creation. We can also express gratitude for our life, our family, our friends, and our hope. And we want to thank Jehovah for allowing us to enjoy his precious friendship.

⁹ We may need to make a special effort to think about the reasons that we personally have to be grateful to Jehovah. We live in an unthankful world. People are often focused on what they want rather than on what they can do to show appreciation for what they have. If that attitude were to rub off on us, our prayers could become a list of requests. To prevent that from happening, we need to continue to cultivate and express appreciation for all that Jehovah does for us.—Luke 6:45.

¹⁰ A thankful attitude can help us to endure difficulties. Consider the experience of Kyung-sook, found in the January 15, 2015, issue of *The Watchtower*. She was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer. “This health issue hit me hard,” she admitted. “I felt that I had lost everything, and I was very scared.” What helped her to cope? She said that every night before going to bed, she would go to the rooftop of her home and pray out loud about five things that she was grateful for that day. This

9. Why may we need to cultivate appreciation for Jehovah?

10. How did feelings of gratitude help one sister to endure? (See also picture.)

Expressing our gratitude to Jehovah can help us to endure
(See paragraph 10)

honor Jehovah. They are in heaven with him and have come to know him well. They see his qualities revealed in what he does. As they observe Jehovah in action, they are moved to praise him.—Job 38:4-7.

⁷ We too want to include praise to Jehovah in our prayers, expressing what we love and appreciate about him. As you read and study the Bible, try to identify the qualities manifested by Jehovah that especially appeal to you. (Job 37:23; Rom. 11:33) Then tell Jehovah how you feel about those qualities. We can also praise Jehovah for acting in our behalf and in behalf of our entire spiritual family. He is constantly caring for and protecting us.—1 Sam. 1:27; 2:1, 2.

⁸ **Thank Jehovah.** We have many reasons to thank Jehovah in prayer. (**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18.**) We can thank

7. For what can we praise Jehovah?

8. What are some of the many reasons why we thank Jehovah? (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

caused her to feel reassured and moved her to express her love for Jehovah. She experienced how Jehovah sustains his faithful servants when they face troublesome circumstances, and she came to realize that there are far more blessings in our lives than there are trials. Like Kyung-sook, we have many reasons to be thankful to Jehovah, even if we are in the midst of a trial. Expressing our gratitude to him in prayer can help us to endure and to maintain our emotional balance.

11 *Ask Jehovah for boldness in the ministry.* Just before returning to heaven, Jesus reminded his disciples of their assignment to give a witness about him “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-48) A short time later, the Jewish leaders seized the apostles Peter and John and brought them before the Sanhedrin, demanding that these faithful men stop preaching, even threatening them. (Acts 4:18, 21) How did Peter and John react?

12 In response to the threats of the Jewish religious leaders, Peter and John said: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves. But as for us, we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19, 20) When Peter and John were released, the disciples raised their

voices to Jehovah in a prayer that focused on his will. They prayed: “Grant to your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness.” Jehovah answered that sincere prayer.—**Read Acts 4:29, 31.**

13 We can imitate the disciples by continuing to preach even when secular authorities demand that we stop. Consider the example of Jin-hyuk, a brother who was imprisoned because of his neutral stand. In prison, he was assigned to care for some prisoners in solitary confinement, but he was not allowed to talk to them about anything unrelated to that assignment, including the Bible. He prayed for boldness and tactfulness to speak the truth at every opportunity. (Acts 5:29) He says: “Jehovah answered my prayers by giving me the courage and the wisdom to start many five-minute Bible studies right at the cell doors. Then, at night, I wrote letters that I would give to the inmates the next day.” We too can be confident that Jehovah will help us to accomplish our ministry. Like Jin-hyuk, we can pray for boldness and wisdom.

14 *Ask for Jehovah’s help to deal with problems.* Many of us are coping with physical or emotional challenges, the loss of a loved one, a difficult family situation, persecution, or some other problem. And such things as pandemics and wars have made many of these challenges even harder to deal

11. Why did Jesus’ disciples need boldness after Jesus returned to heaven?

12. According to Acts 4:29, 31, what did the disciples do?

13. What can we learn from the example of Jin-hyuk?

14. What can help us when we are dealing with problems? (Psalm 37:3, 5)



To resist temptation, (1) pray for Jehovah's help, (2) act in harmony with your prayers, and (3) strengthen your relationship with Jehovah
(See paragraphs 16-17)

with. Pour out your heart to Jehovah. Tell him about your situation just as you would tell a close friend. Be assured that Jehovah “will act in your behalf.”
—**Read Psalm 37:3, 5.**

¹⁵ Persevering in prayer will help us to “endure under tribulation.” (Rom. 12: 12) Jehovah knows what his worshippers are going through—“he hears their cry for help.” (Ps. 145:18, 19) A 29-year-old pioneer named Kristie found that to be true. She unexpectedly began to have serious health problems. As a result, she fell into a deep depression. Later, she learned that her mother had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Kristie says: “I prayed intensely to Jehovah to give me the strength to get through each day. I tried to stick to a good spiritual routine by attend-

ing meetings and doing personal study.” She adds: “Prayer got me through the dark moments. I knew that Jehovah was always there, and that thought was a tremendous source of comfort. Although my health problems weren’t resolved right away, Jehovah answered my prayers by giving me inner peace and a calm heart.” May we never forget that “Jehovah knows how to rescue people of godly devotion out of trial.” —2 Pet. 2:9.

¹⁶ **Ask for Jehovah’s help to resist temptation.** As imperfect humans, we have a constant struggle against the temptation to do what is wrong. Satan is doing all he can to make that struggle as hard as possible. One way he tries to corrupt our thinking is by means of debased entertainment. Such enter-

15. How can prayer help us to “endure under tribulation”? Give an example.

16. Why do we need Jehovah’s help to resist temptation?

tainment can fill our mind with unclean thoughts—thoughts that defile our inner person and can lead to serious sin.—Mark 7:21-23; Jas. 1:14, 15.

¹⁷ We need Jehovah’s help if we are to overcome the temptation to do what is wrong. Jesus included the following petition in the model prayer: “Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the wicked one.” (Matt. 6:13) Jehovah wants to come to our aid, but we must ask him for his help. We must also act in harmony with our prayers. We can take practical steps to minimize our exposure to the wrong thinking and ideas popular in Satan’s system. (Ps. 97:10) We can fill our mind with wholesome thoughts by reading and studying the Bible. Attending meetings and taking part in the ministry will also safeguard

17. How can we act in harmony with our request to avoid temptation? (See also picture.)

our thinking. Jehovah, in turn, promises that he will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear.—1 Cor. 10:12, 13.

¹⁸ Each of us needs to pray more than ever to remain faithful to Jehovah during these difficult last days. Set aside time each day for heartfelt prayer. Jehovah wants us to ‘pour out our hearts before him’ in prayer. (Ps. 62:8) Praise Jehovah and thank him for all that he does. Ask him to help you to be courageous in the ministry. Beg him for help to deal with any problems and to resist any temptation that you may be facing. Do not let anything or anyone stop you from regularly praying to Jehovah. How, though, does Jehovah answer our prayers? We will consider that important question in the next article.

18. With regard to prayer, what do we all need to do?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ■ How did Jesus show that prayer was important to him? | ■ What are some subjects we can include in our prayers? | ■ What are you determined to do with regard to your prayers? |
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SONG 41

Please Hear My Prayer

PREVIEW

Jehovah assures us that he will answer our prayers if they are in harmony with his will. When we go through trials, we can be confident that he will give us the help we need to remain faithful to him. Let us consider how Jehovah answers our prayers.

How Jehovah Answers Our Prayers

“We know that we are to have the things we ask for, since we have asked them of him.”—1 JOHN 5:15.

HAVE you ever wondered whether Jehovah is answering your prayers? If so, you are not alone. A number of brothers and sisters have voiced this concern, especially when going through a difficult time. If we are suffering, we too may find it harder to discern how Jehovah is answering our prayers.

² Let us review why we can be confident that Jehovah answers the prayers of his worshippers. (1 John 5:15) We will also consider these questions: Why might it at times seem that Jehovah is not answering our prayers? In what ways is Jehovah answering prayers today?

JEHOVAH MAY NOT ANSWER IN THE WAY THAT WE EXPECT

³ The Scriptures assure us that Jehovah loves us deeply and that we are precious to him. (Hag. 2:7; 1 John 4:10) That is why he invites us to ask for his help in prayer. (1 Pet. 5:6, 7) He wants to help us to stay close to him and to deal successfully with the difficulties we are facing.

⁴ In the Bible, we often read that Jehovah answered the prayers of his worshippers. Can you think of an example? What about King David? He faced many dangerous enemies throughout his life, and he often sought Jehovah’s help in prayer. On one occasion, he pleaded: “O Jehovah, hear my prayer; listen to my plea for help. In your

1-2. What might we wonder about when it comes to our prayers?

3. Why does Jehovah want us to pray to him?

4. How do we know that Jehovah answers the prayers of his worshippers? (See also picture.)



Jehovah answered David's prayers by delivering him from his enemies and Paul's prayers by giving him the power he needed to endure

(See paragraphs 4-5)

faithfulness and in your righteousness, answer me." (Ps. 143:1) Jehovah answered David's prayers for deliverance. (1 Sam. 19:10, 18-20; 2 Sam. 5:17-25) David could confidently say: "Jehovah is near to all those calling on him." We too can have that assurance.—Ps. 145:18.

⁵ Jehovah may not answer our prayers in the way that we expect. That was the case with the apostle Paul. He asked God to remove "a thorn in the flesh." On three occasions, Paul prayed specifically about this difficult problem. Did Jehovah answer those prayers? Yes, but not in the way that Paul had hoped. Instead of removing the problem, Jehovah gave him the power that he needed to keep serving Him faithfully.—2 Cor. 12:7-10.

⁶ We too may at times receive an answer that differs from what we expect. We can be sure that Jehovah knows exactly how best to help us. He can even "do more than superabundantly beyond

all the things we ask or conceive." (Eph. 3:20) For that reason, his answer to our prayers could come at a time or in a way that we do not anticipate.

⁷ We may need to change what we pray for as we discern Jehovah's will more clearly. Consider the example of Martin Poetzinger. Soon after getting married, Brother Poetzinger was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. At first, he asked Jehovah to let him out of the concentration camp so that he could care for his wife and resume his preaching work. However, after two weeks, he saw no indication that Jehovah was opening the way for him to leave. So he began praying: "Jehovah, please show me what you want me to do." He then began to think about what the other brothers in the camp were going through. Many of them were very worried about their own wife and children. Brother Poetzinger then prayed: "Jehovah, thank you for my new assignment. Help me to strengthen and encourage my

5. Did Jehovah's worshippers in the past always have their prayers answered in the way that they expected? Give an example. (See also picture.)

6. At times, why may it seem that Jehovah is not answering our prayers?

7. Why may we need to change what we pray for? Give an example.



How does Jehovah give us the power to endure?
(See paragraph 10)

brothers.” He spent the next nine years in the camps doing exactly that!

⁸ We must remember that Jehovah has a purpose, and he will fulfill it according to his established timetable. That purpose includes completely and permanently eliminating all problems that cause so much suffering today—problems such as natural disasters, sickness, and death. Jehovah will accomplish his purpose by means of his Kingdom. (Dan. 2:44; Rev. 21:3, 4) However, until that time, Jehovah is permitting Satan to rule the world.* (John 12:31; Rev. 12:9) If Jehovah were to solve mankind’s problems now, it could appear as if Satan’s rulership were having a measure of success. So while we must wait for Jehovah to fulfill certain promises, this does not mean that he leaves us

* For a discussion of why Jehovah has permitted Satan to rule the world, see the article “Keep Your Eyes on the Big Issue,” published in *The Watchtower* of June 2017.

8. What important factor should we keep in mind when praying?

without help. Let us consider some ways in which Jehovah comes to our aid.

WAYS IN WHICH JEHOVAH ANSWERS PRAYERS TODAY

⁹ *He gives us wisdom.* Jehovah promises to give us the wisdom we need to make good decisions. We especially need godly wisdom when making decisions that will affect the rest of our life, such as whether to remain single or to get married. (Jas. 1:5) Consider the experience of a single sister named Maria.* She was happily serving as a regular pioneer when she met a brother. She says: “As our friendship developed, so did our feelings for each other. I knew I had to make a decision. I prayed long and hard about the matter. I needed Jehovah’s guidance, but I also knew that Jehovah wouldn’t make the decision for me.” She feels that Jehovah answered her prayers for wisdom. How? As she did research in our publications, she was able to find specific articles that helped her to work through her questions. She also took to heart the wise advice of her faithful mother. That advice helped Maria to analyze her feelings. In the end, she was able to make a wise decision.

¹⁰ *He gives us the power to endure.* Just as he did for the apostle Paul, Jehovah will give us the power we need to endure our trials. **(Read Philippians 4:13.)** Consider how Jehovah helped

* Some names have been changed.

9. How can Jehovah help us when we need to make decisions? Illustrate.

10. According to Philippians 4:13, what will Jehovah do to help his worshippers? Give an example. (See also picture.)

a brother named Benjamin to endure difficult circumstances. For most of his youth, Benjamin and his family lived in refugee camps in Africa. Benjamin says: “I prayed constantly to Jehovah, asking him to give me the power to do what is pleasing in his eyes. Jehovah answered my prayers by giving me peace of mind, the courage to continue preaching, and the publications to stay spiritually strong.” He goes on to explain: “Reading the experiences of fellow Witnesses and learning how Jehovah helped them to endure strengthened my determination to remain faithful.”

11 *He uses our spiritual family.* The night before he sacrificed his life, Jesus prayed earnestly. He begged Jehovah to spare him the reproach of being considered a blasphemer. Instead of doing that, Jehovah helped Jesus by sending one of his angelic brothers to strengthen

him. (Luke 22:42, 43) Jehovah may also help us by means of an encouraging call or visit from one of our brothers or sisters. All of us can look for opportunities to offer “a good word” to fellow believers.—Prov. 12:25.

12 Consider the experience of a sister named Miriam. A few weeks after her husband died, Miriam was home alone, feeling lost and depressed. She was crying uncontrollably and needed to talk to someone. She says: “I didn’t have the strength to call anyone, so I prayed to Jehovah. While I was still crying and praying, my phone rang. It was an elder, a dear friend.” Miriam received comfort from that elder and his wife. She is convinced that Jehovah moved this brother to call.

13 *He may use people who do not worship him.* (Prov. 21:1) At times, Jehovah answers the prayers of his people by

11-12. How may Jehovah choose to use our spiritual family to answer our prayers? (See also picture.)

13. Relate an example of how Jehovah can use those who do not worship him to answer our prayers.



Have you experienced Jehovah's help by means of fellow believers?
(See paragraphs 11-12)

How may Jehovah influence others to come to our aid?

(See paragraphs 13-14)



moving unbelievers to act in their behalf. For example, he moved King Artaxerxes to grant Nehemiah's request to return to Jerusalem so that he could help with rebuilding the city. (Neh. 2: 3-6) Today, too, Jehovah can move even those who do not worship him to come to our rescue when we are in need.

¹⁴ A sister named Soo Hing felt that Jehovah helped her by means of her doctor. Her son suffers from several mental health problems. When he was involved in a terrible accident, she and her husband resigned from their work to care for him. As a result, they had financial problems. Soo Hing said that she felt like a rubber band that was stretched to the limit. She poured out her heart to Jehovah, asking him for help. The consulting doctor took an interest in their case. This led to their receiving government assistance and an affordable place to live. Afterward, Soo Hing said: "We saw Jehovah's hand in

14. What did you appreciate about Soo Hing's experience? (See also picture.)

this matter. He truly is the 'Hearer of prayer.'"—Ps. 65:2.

SEEKING AND ACCEPTING JEHOVAH'S ANSWER TAKES FAITH

¹⁵ Our prayers are not usually answered in spectacular ways. But the answers we do receive are just what we need to remain loyal to our heavenly Father. So be on the lookout for Jehovah's answers to your prayers. A sister named Yoko felt that Jehovah was not answering her prayers, but then she began to keep a record of what she asked Jehovah for. After some time had gone by, she looked back through her notebook and realized that Jehovah had answered most of her prayers, even some that she had forgotten about. From time to time, we need to pause and reflect on how Jehovah is answering our prayers.—Ps. 66: 19, 20.

¹⁶ We show faith not just by praying to Jehovah but also by accepting his an-

15. What helped one sister to realize that her prayers were being answered?

16. How can we exercise faith when it comes to prayer? (Hebrews 11:6)

swer to our prayers in whatever form it comes. **(Read Hebrews 11:6.)** Consider the example of Mike and his wife, Chrissy. They had the goal of serving at Bethel. “We applied as a couple for many years and prayed to Jehovah over and over again about this goal,” says Mike, “but we were never invited.” Mike and Chrissy remained confident that Jehovah knew best how to use them in his service. They continued to do all they could, serving as regular pioneers where the need was greater and supporting theocratic construction projects. Today they are in the traveling work. “Jehovah has not always answered our prayers in the way that we expected,” says Mike, “but he *has* answered them and in ways that were even better than we could have imagined.”

¹⁷ **Read Psalm 86:6, 7.** The psalmist

17-18. According to Psalm 86:6, 7, of what can we be confident?

David was sure that Jehovah heard and answered his prayers. You can have that same confidence. The examples discussed in this article assure us that Jehovah can give us the wisdom and the power we need to endure. He may use our spiritual family or even those who do not worship him at present to help us in some way.

¹⁸ While Jehovah may not always answer our prayers in the way that we expect, we know that he will answer them. He will provide just what we need and exactly when we need it. So continue to pray in faith, confident that Jehovah will care for you now and that he will “satisfy the desire of every living thing” in the new world to come.—Ps. 145:16.

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 11: A mother and her daughter arrive in a new land as refugees. Fellow believers warmly welcome them and give them practical help.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- Why may Jehovah not answer our prayers in the way that we expect?
- Give some examples of ways in which Jehovah may answer our prayers.
- How can we exercise faith when we are seeking answers to our prayers?

SONG 31

Oh, Walk With God!

PREVIEW

Jehovah called the figurative highway from Babylon to Israel “the Way of Holiness.” Has Jehovah similarly cleared a way for his people in modern times? Yes! Since 1919 C.E., millions have left Babylon the Great and have begun traveling on “the Way of Holiness.” All of us must remain on it until we reach our final destination.

Keep Traveling on “the Way of Holiness”

“A highway will be there, . . . the Way of Holiness.”—ISA. 35:8.

THE word had gone out! The Jews, who had been captives in Babylon for some 70 years, were free to return to their homeland, Israel. **(Read Ezra 1:2-4.)** Only Jehovah could have accomplished this. Why can we say that? Babylon would not normally release its captives. (Isa. 14: 4, 17) But Babylon had been overthrown, and the new ruler had told the Jews that they could leave the country. As a result, every Jew, especially family heads, faced a decision: to leave Babylon or to stay behind. That decision might not have been an easy one to make. Why not?

² Old age prevented many from risking the hardships of the trip. And since most of the Jews had been born in Babylon, it was the only home they had ever known. To them, Israel was the land of their ancestors. Some Jews had apparently become very successful in Babylon, so they may have found it hard to leave their comfortable homes or their businesses and settle in an unfamiliar land.

³ In the minds of faithful Jews, the benefits of returning to Israel far outweighed any sacrifices they would make. The greatest blessing involved their worship. Although there were more than 50 pagan temples in Babylon, there was no temple of Jehovah in that city. There was no altar where the Israelites could offer up the sacrifices required by the Mosaic Law, and there was

1-2. What important decision did Jews living in Babylon have to make? (Ezra 1:2-4)

3. What blessing awaited the remnant of faithful Jews who would return to Israel?

no organized priesthood to offer those sacrifices. In addition, Jehovah's people were greatly outnumbered by pagan men and women, who had no regard for Jehovah or his standards. So God-fearing Jews—thousands of them—were looking forward to returning to their homeland where they could restore pure worship.

⁴ The difficult literal journey from Babylon to Israel could take about four months, but Jehovah promised that any obstacles that seemed to prevent their return would be cleared away. Isaiah wrote: "Clear up the way of Jehovah! Make a straight highway through the desert for our God. . . . The rough ground must become level, and the rugged ground a valley plain." (Isa. 40:3, 4) Just picture this scene: a highway through the desert, a level valley plain. What a blessing that would be for travelers! It would be a lot easier for them to travel on a straight highway than to trudge up and down or around mountains, hills, or valleys. It would be faster too.

⁵ Today, many literal highways are identified by a name or a number. The figurative highway Isaiah wrote about also had a name. We read: "A highway will be there, yes, a way called the Way of Holiness. The unclean one will not travel on it." (Isa. 35:8) What did this promise mean for the Israelites back then? And what does it mean for us today?

4. What help did Jehovah promise to give the Jews returning to Israel?

5. What name was given to the figurative highway between Babylon and Israel?

"THE WAY OF HOLINESS" —THEN AND NOW

⁶ "The Way of Holiness"—what a beautiful name for a highway! Why was the road called holy? There would be no place in the restored nation of Israel for "the unclean one"—any Jew who was determined to practice immorality, idolatry, or other gross sins. The returning Jews were to become "a holy people" to their God. (Deut. 7:6) That did not mean, though, that those who left Babylon did not need to make changes in order to please Jehovah.

⁷ As noted earlier, most of the Jews were born in Babylon, and many had apparently become accustomed to some of the thinking and standards of the Babylonians. Decades after the first Jews returned to Israel, Ezra learned that some Jews had formed marriage alliances with pagan women. (Ex. 34:15, 16; Ezra 9:1, 2) Still later, Governor Nehemiah was astonished to find out that children born in Israel had not even learned the language of the Jews. (Deut. 6:6, 7; Neh. 13:23, 24) How could those young ones learn to love and worship Jehovah if they could not understand Hebrew—the main language in which God's Word was written? (Ezra 10:3, 44) So those Jews had significant changes to make, but it would be much easier for them to make those changes in Israel, where pure worship was gradually being restored.—Neh. 8:8, 9.

⁸ 'That is all very interesting,' some

6. Why was this road called holy?

7. What changes did some of the Jews need to make? Give an example.

8. Why should events that happened so long ago be of interest to us today? (See cover picture.)

might think, ‘but does what happened to the Jews so long ago have any meaning for us today?’ Indeed it does because, in a sense, we are traveling on “the Way of Holiness.” Whether we are of the anointed or of the “other sheep,” we need to remain on “the Way of Holiness” as it takes us through the spiritual paradise and leads us to future Kingdom blessings.* (John 10:16) Since 1919 C.E., millions of men, women, and children have left Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, and have begun traveling on that figurative road. You are likely among them. Although the road was opened some 100 years ago, preparatory work on that highway began centuries earlier.

PREPARING THE ROAD

⁹ For the Jews leaving Babylon, Jehovah saw to it that obstacles were removed. (**Read Isaiah 57:14.**) What about the modern-day “Way of Holiness”? For many centuries leading up to 1919, Jehovah used God-fearing men to help clear the way out of Babylon the Great. (Compare Isaiah 40:3.) They did necessary preparatory work—spiritual roadwork—to make it possible later for righteous people to leave Babylon the Great and enter the spiritual paradise, where pure worship of Jehovah had been restored. What did this “roadwork” involve? Consider some of the preparatory work that was done.

* See *Isaiah's Prophecy—Light for All Mankind II*, pp. 56-57.

9. In harmony with Isaiah 57:14, in what sense has preparatory work been done on “the Way of Holiness”?

¹⁰ **Printing.** Up until the middle of the 15th century, the Bible was copied by hand. The work took a long time, and copies of the Bible were rare and very expensive. But when a printing press with movable type was invented, the Bible could more easily be produced and distributed.

¹¹ **Translating.** For centuries, the Bible was available mainly in Latin, which only well-educated people could understand. When printing became more common, however, God-fearing individuals intensified the work of translating the Bible into languages spoken by the common people. Now Bible readers could compare what they were being taught by the clergy with what the Bible really teaches.

¹² **Bible study aids.** Careful students of the Bible learned a great deal from what they read in God’s Word. And, much to the displeasure of many clergymen, they rarely kept their discoveries to themselves. In the 19th century, for example, a number of sincere men began to publish tracts that exposed the false religious teachings of the churches.

¹³ About 1835 a God-fearing man named Henry Grew published a tract discussing the condition of the dead. In it, he proved from the Scriptures that immortality is a gift from God, not a condition we are all born with, as most of the churches taught. In 1837 a minis-

10-11. How have printing and translating the Bible contributed to the spread of Bible knowledge? (See also picture.)

12-13. Give an example of how sincere students of the Bible in the 19th century began to expose false religious teachings.

ter named George Storrs found a copy of that tract while riding a train. He read it and was convinced that he had discovered a vital truth. He decided to share what he had learned. In 1842 he gave a series of lectures on the intriguing theme “An Inquiry—Are the Wicked Immortal?” The writings of George Storrs had a positive influence on a young man named Charles Taze Russell.

¹⁴ In what ways did Brother Russell and his associates benefit from the spiritual roadwork that had been done in the past? In their studies, they were able to consult lexicons, concordances, and various translations of the Bible, all of which had been prepared before their time. They also benefited from the Bible research of such men as Henry Grew, George Storrs, and others. Brother Rus-

14. In what ways did Brother Russell and his associates benefit from the spiritual roadwork of the past? (See also picture.)

sell and his associates contributed to the spiritual roadwork themselves by producing an abundance of books and tracts that considered Bible topics.

¹⁵ In 1919, Babylon the Great lost its hold over God’s people. That year, a “faithful and discreet slave” came on the scene, just in time to welcome honest-hearted ones to the newly opened “Way of Holiness.” (Matt. 24:45-47) Thanks in part to the faithful “road workers” of the past, those setting foot on that highway could increase their knowledge of Jehovah’s purposes. (Prov. 4:18) They could also bring their life into harmony with Jehovah’s requirements. Jehovah has not expected his people to make the necessary changes all at once. Rather, he has refined his people over time. (See the box “Jehovah Gradually Refines His People.”) How happy we will all be when

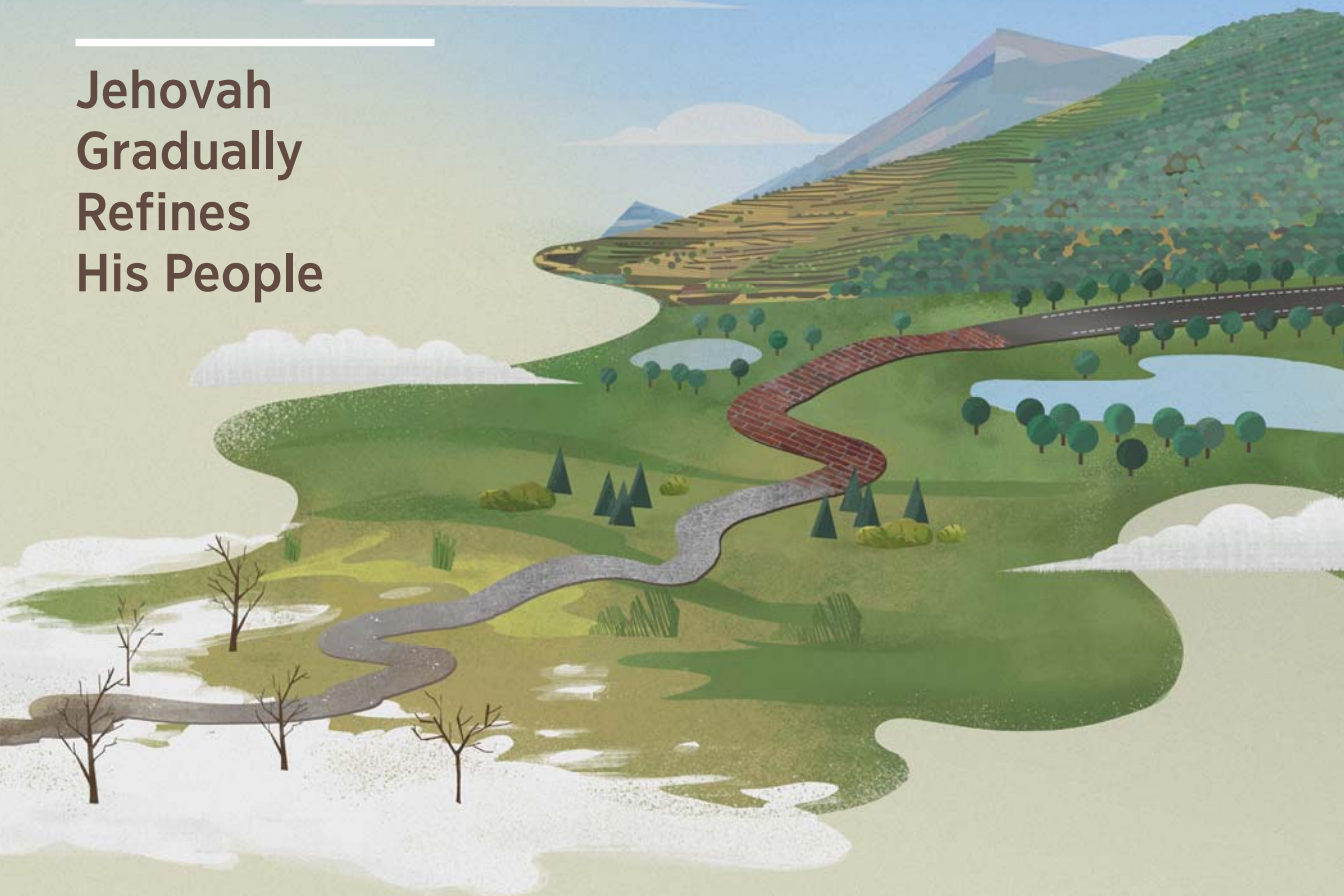
15. What important developments took place in 1919?



For many centuries leading up to 1919 C.E., God-fearing men helped to clear the way out of Babylon the Great
(See paragraphs 10-14)



Jehovah Gradually Refines His People



1927-1928: Christmas is understood to be a pagan celebration

1928-1936: The use of the cross is gradually discontinued

1931: The name Jehovah's Witnesses is adopted

1938: The election of elders is discontinued

1944-1945: The sanctity of blood is clarified

1952: The need for disfellowshipping is emphasized

1956: The sanctity of marriage is clarified

1972: Congregation oversight is assigned to a theocratically appointed body of elders

1973: The use of tobacco is understood to be a serious wrongdoing

1976: Instruction is given as to the types of employment that are acceptable for Christians

2000: The use of blood fractions is discussed in detail

2006, 2012: The seriousness of viewing abhorrent forms of pornography is clearly emphasized

we are able to please our God in everything we do!—Col. 1:10.

“THE WAY OF HOLINESS” IS STILL OPEN

¹⁶ Every road needs regular maintenance. Since 1919, roadwork on “the Way of Holiness” has continued, with a view to making it possible for more people to leave Babylon the Great. The newly appointed faithful and discreet slave got to work, and in 1921, they published a Bible-study aid designed to help beginners learn Bible truth. That publication, *The Harp of God*, eventually had a circulation of almost six million copies in 36 languages, and many learned the truth from it. More recently, we have a fine new publication for conducting Bible studies, *Enjoy Life Forever!* Throughout the last days, Jehovah has used his organization to provide a steady flow of spiritual food to help all of us to keep traveling on “the Way of Holiness.”—**Read Isaiah 48:17; 60:17.**

16. Since 1919, what maintenance has been done on “the Way of Holiness”? (Isaiah 48:17; 60:17)

¹⁷ We might say that whenever someone accepts a Bible study, he has an opportunity to step onto “the Way of Holiness.” Some travel only a short distance and then leave the highway. Others are determined to keep traveling on it until they reach their destination. What is that destination?

¹⁸ For those with a heavenly hope, “the Way of Holiness” leads to “the paradise of God” in heaven. (Rev. 2:7) For those with an earthly hope, that highway leads to perfection at the end of the 1,000 years. If you are traveling on that highway today, do not look back. And do not leave it until you have completed your journey to the new world! We warmly wish you “safe travels.”

17-18. Where does “the Way of Holiness” lead?

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 17: Brother Russell and his associates used Bible study aids that had been prepared before their time.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What did “the Way of Holiness” mean for the Jews in ancient times?
- When was the modern-day “Way of Holiness” open for travelers, and what work had been done to prepare that figurative highway?
- Who travel on “the Way of Holiness” today, and what is their final destination?

SONG 131

“What God Has
Yoked Together”

PREVIEW

Jehovah gave humans the gift of marriage, which allows a husband and wife to enjoy a special love between them. At times, however, that love could cool off. If you are married, this article will help you to keep your love alive and enjoy a happy marriage.

Keep “the Flame of Jah” Alive

“[Love’s] flames are a blazing fire, the flame of Jah.”

—SONG OF SOL. 8:6.

LOVE’S “flames are a blazing fire, the flame of Jah. Surging waters cannot extinguish love, nor can rivers wash it away.”* (Song of Sol. 8:6, 7) What a beautiful description of true love! These words contain a reassuring truth for married couples: You *can* have unfailing love for each other.

² Whether a married couple will have unfailing love as long as they live depends on them. To illustrate, a campfire has the potential to burn indefinitely—but only if it is fed. If left unattended, the fire will eventually go out. Likewise, the love between a husband and wife can remain strong indefinitely—but only if they nurture their relationship. At times, a couple could feel that their love is cooling off, especially when they are weighed down by financial hardship, health concerns, or the pressures of raising children. So if you are married, how can you keep “the flame of Jah” alive in your marriage? In this article, we will discuss three ways to keep your relationship strong and enjoy a happy marriage.[#]

* True love, which is constant and enduring, is called “the flame of Jah” because Jehovah is the Originator of such love.

[#] Even if you have an unbelieving spouse, you may find these suggestions to be helpful in strengthening your relationship.—1 Cor. 7:12-14; 1 Pet. 3:1, 2.

1. How does the Bible describe true love?
2. What must a couple do to make sure that their love does not cool off?



Like Joseph and Mary, a husband and wife need to have a strong relationship with Jehovah
(See paragraph 3)

KEEP STRENGTHENING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JEHOVAH

³ To keep “the flame of Jah” alive, both husband and wife should work to have a strong relationship with Jehovah. How does this bond help their marriage? When a couple value their friendship with their heavenly Father, they readily apply his advice, which in turn helps them to avoid and overcome problems that could cause their love for each other to cool off. (**Read Ecclesiastes 4:12.**) Spiritual people also strive to imitate Jehovah and cultivate qualities that he displays, such as kindness, patience, and forgiveness. (Eph. 4:32–5:1) A couple who display such qualities make it easier for love to thrive. A sister named Lena, who has been married for more than 25 years, says, “It’s easy to love and respect a spiritual person.”

⁴ Consider a Bible example. When Jehovah had to choose a couple to be the parents of the future Messiah, He chose Joseph and Mary out of the many descendants of David. Why? They both had a personal relationship with Jeho-

vah, and Jehovah knew that they would build their marriage around their love for him. Married couples, what can you learn from Joseph and from Mary?

⁵ Joseph readily applied Jehovah’s direction, and that made him a better husband. On at least three occasions, he received instructions from God regarding his family. Each time, he obeyed promptly, even when it meant making big changes. (Matt. 1:20, 24; 2:13-15, 19-21) By following God’s direction, Joseph protected Mary, supported her, and provided for her. Imagine how Joseph’s actions must have deepened Mary’s love and respect for him! Husbands, you can imitate Joseph by seeking Bible-based advice on caring for your family.* When you apply this advice, even if it means making changes, you show love for your wife and you strengthen your marriage. A sister in Vanuatu who has been married for over 20 years says: “When my husband seeks and applies Jehovah’s direction, I respect him more. I feel secure, and I have confidence in his decisions.”

3. How does a strong relationship with Jehovah help a couple to keep their love alive? (Ecclesiastes 4:12) (See also picture.)

4. Why did Jehovah choose Joseph and Mary to be the parents of the future Messiah?

* For example, consider the practical advice in the article series “Help for the Family,” which is available on jw.org and in *JW Library*®.

5. What can husbands learn from Joseph?

⁶ Mary had her own relationship with Jehovah; her faith did not depend on what Joseph did. She knew the Scriptures well. (See study note on Luke 1: 46.) She also made time for meditation. (Luke 2:19, 51) No doubt, Mary's spirituality made her an excellent wife. Today, many wives strive to do as Mary did. For example, a sister named Emiko says: "When I was single, I had my personal spiritual routine. But after getting married, I realized that because my husband prayed for us and took the lead in worship, my faith had become dependent on what he did. I came to see that I needed to carry my own load regarding my relationship with Jehovah. So now I set aside time to be alone with my God—praying, reading the Scriptures, and meditating on his thoughts." (Gal. 6:5) Wives, as you continue strengthening your friendship with Jehovah, your husband will have even more reason to praise you and love you.—Prov. 31:30.

⁷ Joseph and Mary also worked together to keep their relationship with Jehovah strong. They understood the importance of worshipping Jehovah together as a family. (Luke 2:22-24, 41; 4:16) It may have been challenging to do so, especially as the family grew, but they managed. What an excellent example for married couples today! If you have children, as did Joseph and Mary, it may be challenging to attend meetings or to schedule time for family worship. It may be even harder to coordinate

time to study or pray together as a couple. Yet, remember that when you worship Jehovah together, you draw closer to him and to each other. So make worship a priority.

⁸ What if your marriage is strained? The idea of being together for family worship may not seem appealing. If so, begin by considering something short and enjoyable, something that you both agree to discuss. This step can strengthen your relationship and your desire to do spiritual things as a couple.

SPEND TIME TOGETHER

⁹ Married couples, you can also keep your love alive by spending time together. When you do, you are less likely to drift apart—mentally and emotionally. (Gen. 2:24) Note what Lilia and Ruslan discovered soon after they got married, over 15 years ago. She says: "We realized that we would not have as much time together as we had thought. Our days were consumed by secular work, housework, and later our children. We found that if we did not make time for ourselves as a couple, we could draw away from each other."

¹⁰ What can couples do to make sure that they spend time together? You may have to set aside, or schedule, time for each other. **(Read Ephesians 5:15, 16.)** A brother in Nigeria named Uzundu says: "When scheduling my activities, I

6. What can wives learn from Mary?

7. What can couples learn from Joseph and Mary about worshipping together?

8. What can a couple whose marriage is strained do to benefit more fully from family worship?

9. Why must a husband and wife spend time with each other?

10. How can married couples apply the principle found at Ephesians 5:15, 16?



What activities can you do together as a couple?
(See paragraphs 11-12)

include the time my wife and I will spend together as a couple, and I make that time a priority.” (Phil. 1:10) Consider how Anastasia, the wife of a circuit overseer in Moldova, makes the best use of her time. She says: “I try to do my personal activities while my husband is busy with his responsibilities. That way, we can spend time together later.” But what if your schedules make it difficult for you to find time to spend together?

¹¹ Married couples can learn from the example of Aquila and Priscilla, a couple appreciated by many early Christians. (Rom. 16:3, 4) While the Bible does not provide many details about their marriage, it does reveal that they worked, preached, and helped others **together**. (Acts 18:2, 3, 24-26) In fact, whenever the Bible mentions Aquila and Priscilla, it always mentions them together.

¹² How can couples imitate Aquila and Priscilla? Think about the many things that you and your spouse need to do. Could you handle some of these tasks as a couple instead of individually? For example, Aquila and Priscilla preached together. Do you regularly make plans to

do the same? Aquila and Priscilla also worked together. You and your spouse may not have the same job, but could you do household chores together? (Eccl. 4:9) When you help each other perform a task, you feel more like a team and you have the opportunity to talk. Robert and Linda have been married for over 50 years. He says: “Frankly, we don’t have a lot of time to spend together in recreation. But when I wash the dishes and my wife dries them or when I am outside weeding and she comes out to work alongside me, I feel so happy. Doing things together brings us together. Our love continues to grow.”

¹³ Remember, however, that just being together might not necessarily contribute to unity. A wife in Brazil says: “Nowadays, with so many distractions, I’ve found that we could fall into the trap of thinking that we are spending time together just because we live under the same roof. I have learned that being together is only half of the equation. The other half involves giving my spouse the attention he needs.” Note how Bruno and his wife, Tays, make sure to give each other attention. He says: “During

11. What activities did Aquila and Priscilla share in together?

12. What can a husband and wife do to spend more time together? (See also picture.)

13. To be truly united, what should a husband and wife do?

A Christian husband needs to show respect for his wife's feelings by listening attentively to her
(See paragraph 16)



our free time together, we put away our cell phones and enjoy the time with each other.”

¹⁴ However, what if you and your spouse do not enjoy spending time together? Perhaps you have different interests, or maybe you irritate each other. What can you do? Consider the campfire mentioned earlier. It does not start blazing instantly. It needs to be fed slowly with progressively bigger pieces of wood. Similarly, why not start by spending just a few moments together each day? Make sure to do something that you both enjoy, not something that could create conflict. (Jas. 3: 18) By starting small, you may begin to rekindle your love.

TREAT EACH OTHER RESPECTFULLY

¹⁵ Respect is vital in a marriage. It is like the oxygen that allows a campfire to burn brightly. Without oxygen, a fire quickly goes out. Similarly, without respect, a couple will find that their love can quickly grow cold. On the other hand, a husband and wife who strive to show respect for each other are working

14. If a couple do not enjoy spending time together, what can they do?

15. Why is respect vital in order to keep a couple's love alive?

to keep their love alive. Yet, bear in mind that it is, not a matter of whether **you** think that you show respect, but a matter of whether your **spouse** feels respected. Penny and Aret have been married for over 25 years. She says: “Our mutual respect creates a warm atmosphere in our home. We feel free to express ourselves because we know that we value each other’s opinions.” So, what can you do to help your spouse feel that you really respect him or her? Consider the examples of Abraham and Sarah.

¹⁶ Abraham treated Sarah with respect. He took into consideration Sarah’s opinions and respected her feelings. On one occasion, Sarah was distressed, and she vented her feelings to Abraham, even blaming him. Did Abraham lash out in response? No. He knew that Sarah was a submissive and supportive wife. Abraham listened to her and tried to resolve the issue. (Gen. 16:5, 6) What can we learn? Husbands, you have the authority to make decisions for your family. (1 Cor. 11:3) Yet, the loving thing to do would be to consider your wife’s opinion before deciding, especially if the decision will affect

16. What can husbands learn from Abraham’s example? (1 Peter 3:7) (See also picture.)

her. (1 Cor. 13:4, 5) At other times, your wife may feel stressed and may need to express how she feels. Do you respect her feelings by listening attentively? **(Read 1 Peter 3:7.)** Angela and Dmitry have been married for nearly 30 years. She explains how her husband makes her feel respected: “Dmitry is always ready to listen to me when I am upset or when I just want to talk. He is patient with me, even when I am very emotional.”

¹⁷ Sarah respected Abraham by supporting his decisions. (Gen. 12:5) On one occasion, Abraham decided to extend hospitality to unexpected visitors. He asked Sarah to drop what she was doing and prepare a large quantity of bread. (Gen. 18:6) Sarah acted quickly and supported Abraham’s decision. Wives, you can imitate Sarah by supporting your husband’s decisions. When you do, you strengthen your marriage. **(Read 1 Peter 3:5, 6.)** Dmitry, men-

17. What can wives learn from Sarah’s example? (1 Peter 3:5, 6)

tioned in the preceding paragraph, explains how his wife makes him feel respected. He says: “I appreciate Angela’s efforts to support my decisions, even if our opinions do not coincide. If the outcome is not the best, she does not criticize me.” How easy it is to love someone who respects you!

¹⁸ Today, Satan wants to extinguish the love that exists in Christian marriages. He knows that if a couple lose their love for each other, they may begin to draw away from Jehovah. However, **true** love cannot be extinguished! So may the love in your marriage be like the love described in the Song of Solomon. Be resolved to build your life together around Jehovah, make time for each other, and respect each other’s feelings and needs. As you do, your marriage will bring honor to the Source of true love, Jehovah, and just like a well-tended fire, your love will blaze indefinitely.

18. How do married couples benefit by working to keep their love alive?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ■ How does a strong relationship with Jehovah contribute to a happy marriage? | ■ What can a married couple do to make sure that they spend time together? | ■ In what ways can a married couple treat each other with respect? |
|---|--|--|

SONG 84

Reaching Out

PREVIEW

We are regularly encouraged to set spiritual goals. But what if we have already set a worthy goal that we are struggling to reach? This article will provide various suggestions on how we can reach our goals.

You Can Reach Your Spiritual Goals

“Let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due time we will reap if we do not tire out.”—GAL. 6:9.

HAVE you ever set a spiritual goal but struggled to achieve it? If so, you are not alone. For example, Philip wanted to improve the quality and frequency of his prayers, but he struggled to find time to pray. Erika’s goal was to be punctual for meetings for field service; yet, she still arrived late for nearly every meeting. Tomáš tried several times to read the entire Bible. He says: “I simply didn’t enjoy reading the Bible. I made three attempts, but each time I only made it to Leviticus before stopping.”

² If you currently have a goal that you have not yet achieved, rest assured that you are not a failure. Even reaching a simple goal often requires time and hard work. The fact that you still want to reach your goal shows that you treasure your relationship with Jehovah and want to give him your best. Jehovah values your efforts. Of course, he does not expect more from you than what you can give. (Ps. 103:14; Mic. 6:8) So your goal should be reasonable, according to what your circum-

*** EXPRESSION EXPLAINED: A spiritual goal** can include anything you work hard to improve or to achieve so that you can serve Jehovah more fully and make him happy. For example, you may set the goal of cultivating a Christian quality or of improving in a facet of your worship, such as Bible reading, personal study, or the field ministry.

1. What struggle have many of us faced?
2. Why should we not get discouraged if we have a spiritual goal that we have not yet achieved?

stances allow. If it is, what can you do to reach it? Let us discuss some suggestions.

MOTIVATION IS VITAL

³ Motivation plays a key role in reaching spiritual goals. A motivated person has a strong incentive or desire to work toward his goal. We could liken motivation to the wind that pushes a sailboat toward its destination. If the wind continues blowing, the sailor will likely reach his destination. And with a strong wind, he may even arrive sooner. Likewise, the more motivated we are, the more likely we are to reach our goals. “When you feel motivated, you try harder,” says David, a brother in El Salvador. “You try not to let anything prevent you from reaching your goal.” So, what can you do to feel more motivated?

⁴ **Pray for more motivation.** By means of his spirit, Jehovah can motivate you to reach your goal. **(Read Philippians 2:13.)** Sometimes we set a goal because we know we should, and that is a good thing. But we may not really have the desire to reach it. This was the case with a sister in Uganda named Norina. She had set the goal of conducting a Bible study, although she lacked motivation because she felt inadequate as a teacher. What helped her? She relates: “I began to ask Jehovah daily to help me increase my desire to conduct a Bible study. In harmony with my prayers, I worked on my teaching skills. After a few months, I noticed that my desire



had grown. That same year, I started two Bible studies.”

⁵ **Meditate on what Jehovah has done for you.** (Ps. 143:5) The apostle Paul meditated on Jehovah’s undeserved kindness toward him, and this motivated him to work hard for Jehovah. (1 Cor. 15:9, 10; 1 Tim. 1:12-14) Similarly, the more you meditate on what Jehovah has done for you, the more motivated you will feel to reach your goal. (Ps. 116:12) Consider what helped a sister in Honduras to reach her goal of becoming a regular pioneer. She says: “I reflected on how much Jehovah loves me. He brought me to his people. He cares for me and protects me. Such meditation strengthened my love for him and increased my motivation.”

⁶ **Focus on the blessings of reaching your goal.** Note what helped Erika,

3. Why is motivation important?

4. What can we pray for? (Philippians 2:13) (See also picture.)

5. On what could we meditate to increase our motivation?

6. What else can help us increase our motivation?

mentioned earlier, with her goal of being punctual. She says: “I realized that I was missing out on so much by being late for the ministry. But by arriving earlier, I would be able to greet the brothers and sisters and spend time with them. I would also be able to listen to practical suggestions that would help me enjoy and improve my ministry.” Erika focused on the benefits of being punctual, and she reached her goal. What blessings could you focus on? If your goal relates to Bible reading or prayer, think about how it will strengthen your friendship with Jehovah. (Ps. 145:18, 19) If your goal is to cultivate a Christian quality, focus on how it will improve your relationships with others. (Col. 3:14) Why not make a list of all the reasons why you want to reach your goal? Regularly consult that list. Tomáš, quoted earlier, says: “The more reasons I have to achieve a goal, the less likely I am to give up on it.”

⁷ Spend time with those who will motivate you. (Prov. 13:20) Note what helped Julio and his wife to reach their goal of expanding their ministry. He says: “We chose friends who supported our goal, and we would discuss our goal with them. Many of them had already achieved similar goals, so they could give us useful suggestions. Our friends would also ask us how our plans were coming along, and they encouraged us when we needed it.”

WHEN WE LACK MOTIVATION

⁸ Realistically, though, we all have days when we do not feel motivated. Does this mean that we cannot work on our goal? No. To illustrate: The wind can be a strong force that pushes a sailboat toward its destination. Yet, the wind varies in strength, and on some days, there may be no wind at all. Does this mean that the sailor cannot keep moving? Not necessarily. For example, some sailboats have a motor; others have oars. The sailor can use these means to keep moving toward his destination. Our motivation can be likened to the wind; how motivated we feel may vary. And on some days, we may feel no motivation to work on our goal. So if we were to work on our goal only when we felt motivated, we might never reach it. But just as the sailor finds other ways to reach his destination, we can still work toward our goal even when we are not motivated. Though this will require self-discipline,

7. What helped Julio and his wife to reach their goal?

8. What could happen if we were to work on a goal only when we felt motivated? (See also picture.)

WORK TOWARD YOUR GOAL

(See paragraph 8)



the results are worthwhile. Before discussing what we can do, let us address a question that may arise.

⁹ Jehovah wants us to serve him happily and willingly. (Ps. 100:2; 2 Cor. 9:7) So should we keep working toward a spiritual goal if we do not feel like it? Consider the apostle Paul's example. He said: "I strictly discipline my body and lead it as a slave." (1 Cor. 9:25-27, study note on verse 27) Paul forced himself to do what was right even when he may have felt inclined to do otherwise. Did Jehovah approve of Paul's service? Definitely! And Jehovah rewarded him for his efforts.—2 Tim. 4:7, 8.

¹⁰ Similarly, Jehovah is pleased to see us working toward our goal even when we do not feel motivated to do so. He is pleased because although we may not always be doing it out of love for *that activity*, he knows that we are doing it out of love *for him*. Just as Jehovah blessed Paul, He will bless us for our efforts. (Ps. 126:5) And as we experience Jehovah's blessing, we may even start to feel motivated. A sister from Poland named Lucyna says: "Sometimes, I do not want to go out in field service, especially when I'm tired. Nevertheless, the joy that I feel after going out is an amazing gift." So let us see what we can do when we lack motivation.

¹¹ **Pray for self-control.** Self-control is the ability to control one's feelings and

actions. The expression often conveys the thought of restraining ourselves from doing bad. However, self-control is also required in order to move us to do good, especially if a task is difficult or if we do not feel motivated. Remember, self-control is part of the fruitage of the spirit, so ask Jehovah for holy spirit to help you cultivate that important quality. (Luke 11:13; Gal. 5:22, 23) David, mentioned earlier, explained how prayer helped him. He wanted to be more regular with his personal study. He says: "I would ask Jehovah to help me cultivate self-control. With his help, I was able to start a good study program and to be consistent."

¹² **Do not wait for perfect circumstances.** In this world, we will likely never have ideal circumstances. If we wait for them, we may never reach our goal. (**Read Ecclesiastes 11:4.**) A brother named Dayniel says: "There are no perfect circumstances. We create the best circumstances when we simply start." A brother in Uganda named Paul mentions yet another reason why we should not procrastinate: "When we start despite challenging circumstances, we give Jehovah something to bless."—Mal. 3:10.

¹³ **Start small.** We may lack motivation because our goal seems very hard to achieve. If this is true in your case, could you break down your goal into smaller ones? If your goal is to cultivate a quality, why not first work on

9. Is it wrong to keep working toward a goal when we do not feel motivated to do so? Explain.

10. What are the benefits of working toward a goal even when we are not motivated?

11. How can Jehovah help us strengthen our self-control?

12. How does the principle found at Ecclesiastes 11:4 relate to spiritual goals?

13. What are the advantages of starting with small goals?

displaying it in small ways? If your goal is to read the entire Bible, could you start by scheduling shorter periods of reading time? Tomáš, mentioned in the introduction, struggled with his goal of reading the Bible in a year. He says: “I realized that I had chosen a pace that was too fast for me. So I decided to try again, but this time, I planned on reading a few paragraphs every day and meditating on them. As a result, I started to enjoy my reading.” As Tomáš’ enjoyment increased, he began reading for longer periods of time. Eventually, he read the whole Bible.*

DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED BY SETBACKS

¹⁴ Unfortunately, no matter how motivated or disciplined we are, we may

* See the book *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*, pp. 10-11, par. 4.

14. What setbacks might we have?

still have setbacks. For example, “unexpected events” may rob us of the time we need to work on our goal. (Eccl. 9:11) We may face a difficulty that leaves us feeling discouraged and with little strength. (Prov. 24:10) Our imperfect flesh may cause us to act in a way that does not help us with our goal. (Rom. 7:23) Or we may just feel tired. (Matt. 26:43) What can help us to overcome a setback or a bad day?

¹⁵ **Remember that a setback does not mean you have failed.** The Bible says that we may repeatedly experience problems or difficulties. However, it also makes clear that we can get up again, especially with Jehovah’s help. **(Read Psalm 145:14.)** The brother named Philip, mentioned earlier, measures success this way: “My success is not based on how many times I fall. Rather, it is based

15. If we have a setback, does that mean we have failed? Explain. (Psalm 145:14)

ENJOY THE JOURNEY

(See paragraph 18)



on how many times I get myself back on track.” David, quoted earlier, says: “I try to view setbacks and bad days, not as obstacles, but as opportunities to show Jehovah how much I love him.” Yes, by moving forward despite a setback, you prove to Jehovah that you want to please him. How happy Jehovah must be when he sees you continuing to strive for your goal!

16 View the setback as a learning experience. Think about what caused it, and ask yourself, ‘Could I change something to avoid having another setback?’ (Prov. 27:12) Sometimes, though, setbacks could reveal that a goal was not as realistic as we thought. If you feel that this might be true in your case, reassess your goal to see if it is still reasonable for *you*.^{*} Jehovah will not consider you a failure for not achieving a goal that was out of your reach.—2 Cor. 8:12.

^{*} For more information, see the article “Cultivate Reasonable Expectations, and Be Joyful” in the July 15, 2008, issue of *The Watchtower*.

16. What can a setback teach us?

17 Keep in mind what you have already achieved. The Bible says that “God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work.” (Heb. 6:10) So neither should you forget. Reflect on what you have already accomplished—be it developing a friendship with Jehovah, speaking to others about him, or getting baptized. Just as you have progressed and reached spiritual goals in the past, you can continue to progress toward your current goal.—Phil. 3:16.

18 With Jehovah’s help, you *can* reach your goal, just like a sailor who happily reaches his destination. But remember, many sailors also enjoy *the journey*. Similarly, as you continue working toward your spiritual goal, do not forget to enjoy seeing how Jehovah helps and blesses you along the way. (2 Cor. 4:7) If you do not give up, you will receive even greater blessings.—Gal. 6:9.

17. Why should we keep in mind what we have already accomplished?

18. What should we remember to do as we work toward our goal? (See also picture.)

AS WE WORK TOWARD A SPIRITUAL GOAL, . . .

■ what can we do to increase our motivation?

■ what can we do when we lack motivation?

■ how should we view setbacks?

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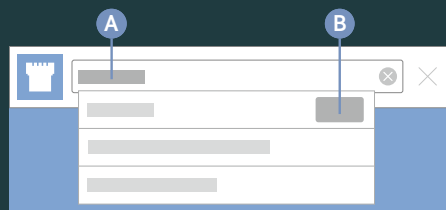
RESEARCH TIP

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Try it: Start typing the word “Jehovah” in the search box (A). Select the search suggestion “Jehovah” that has the word “Topic” next to it (B). You will see matching results from various reference works.



COVER PICTURE:

Since 1919 C.E., millions of men, women, and children have left Babylon the Great and have begun traveling on “the Way of Holiness” (See study article 22, paragraph 8)

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