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Listen, Obey,
and Be Blessed

PREVIEW

Jesus instructed his followers to make disciples and to teach them to **observe** all the things he had commanded them. This article considers how we can follow Jesus' instructions. The information is based in part on an article that was published in *The Watchtower* of July 1, 2004, pages 14-19.

How to Help Others to Observe Christ's Commands

“Go, therefore, and make disciples . . . , teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you.”

—MATT. 28:19, 20.

AFTER Jesus was raised from the dead, he appeared to his disciples who were gathered in Galilee. He had something important to tell them. What was it? His words are found at **Matthew 28:18-20.—Read.**

² Jesus' command to make disciples also applies to each one of God's servants today. Therefore, let us consider three questions related to the assignment that Jesus has given us. First, in addition to teaching God's requirements to new disciples, what should we do? Second, how can all publishers in the congregation contribute to the spiritual growth of Bible students? Third, how can we help inactive fellow believers to share once again in the work of making disciples?

TEACH THEM TO OBSERVE

³ Jesus' instructions are clear. We must teach people the things that he commanded. However, we should not overlook an important detail. Jesus did not say: 'Teach them all the things I have commanded you.' Instead, he said: Teach them “to **observe** all the things I have commanded you.” To apply that specific instruction when teaching a Bible student, we need to be not only teachers but also guides. (Acts 8:31) Why is that the case?

1. According to Matthew 28:18-20, what command did Jesus give?
2. What questions will we consider?
3. What specific instructions did Jesus include in his command?

⁴ To “observe” a command means to obey it. To illustrate how we can teach someone to observe, or obey, the things that Christ commanded, think of this example. How does a driving instructor teach his students to observe the traffic laws? The instructor may first cover the rules of the road in a classroom setting. However, to teach his students how to obey those rules, he has to take another step. He has to accompany the students and guide them as they actually drive in traffic and try to put into practice what they have learned. What can we learn from that example?

⁵ When we study the Bible with others, we teach them what God requires of us. But we must do more. We must teach our Bible students to apply in their daily life what they learn. **(Read John 14:15; 1 John 2:3.)** By example, we can show our students how they can apply basic Scriptural principles at school, at work, or during recreation. We can relate an instance from our life to show them how applying the Bible’s direction protected us from harm or how it helped us to make a wise decision. In the presence of our students, we can pray to Jehovah that the holy spirit guide them.—John 16:13.

⁶ What is included in teaching others to observe Jesus’ commandments? We need to help our Bible students develop the desire to make disciples. For

some students, the idea of sharing in the preaching work may be intimidating. So we need to be patient as we give them the sort of instruction that gradually deepens their understanding, touches their heart, and moves them to action. What approach could we take to help students to develop the desire to share the good news with others?

⁷ We might ask our Bible student such questions as these: “How has accepting the Kingdom message changed your life for the better? Do you think that others need to hear this message? What can you do to help them?” (Prov. 3:27; Matt. 9:37, 38) Show the student the tracts that are part of our Teaching Toolbox and let him choose which ones he thinks would appeal to his relatives, friends, or coworkers.* Give the student a number of these tracts. Have a practice session to teach him how to offer a tract in a tactful way. Of course, after our student is approved as an unbaptized publisher, we will want to be at his side to guide him.—Eccl. 4:9, 10; Luke 6:40.

HOW THE CONGREGATION HELPS BIBLE STUDENTS TO PROGRESS

⁸ Keep in mind that Jesus instructed us to teach others “to observe *all* the things” he commanded. That certainly includes the two greatest commands—to love God and to love neighbor—both

4. What does it mean to observe a command? Illustrate.

5. (a) According to John 14:15 and 1 John 2:3, what do we need to teach our Bible students to do? (b) Give examples of how we can guide our students.

6. What is included in teaching others to observe Jesus’ commandments?

* For simplicity we here refer to the student in the masculine gender.

7. How can we help a student to develop the desire to share the good news with others?

8. Why is it important that our students develop strong love for God and for neighbor? (See also the box “How to Deepen Our Bible Students’ Love for God.”)

HOW TO DEEPEN OUR BIBLE STUDENTS' LOVE FOR GOD



ENCOURAGE THEM TO READ

Encourage Bible students to **read** the Bible even if only for a few minutes every day. Give them a copy of a Bible reading schedule. (See the printable “Bible Reading Schedule.” On jw.org, go to BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE STUDY TOOLS.) Encourage them to **watch** the introductory videos for Bible books, and show them where the videos are found on our website.



HELP THEM TO MEDITATE

Help Bible students to **meditate** on God’s Word. Using “An Introduction to God’s Word,” in the front of the *New World Translation*, show them question 20, “How can you get the most out of your Bible reading?” Explain how the four questions listed there can help them to meditate. To demonstrate this method, read a portion of the Bible together and then answer the four questions. By teaching this method, we enable students to find Bible gems on their own, which will give them joy and will draw them closer to Jehovah.



TEACH THEM TO PRAY

Teach Bible students to **pray** to Jehovah, and help them to understand what can be included in their prayers. Use such scriptures as Psalm 25:4, 5 and 1 John 5:14, 15 to explain why praying to Jehovah is so important. When you pray before and after the Bible study, be specific. Express thoughts that reflect your sincere interest in the student. When our heartfelt prayers reveal our love for Jehovah, our student will be moved to offer his own heartfelt prayers to God. Such prayers will help him to develop the desire to obey Jehovah and follow Christ’s commandments.



of which are closely connected to the preaching and disciple-making work. (Matt. 22:37-39) What is the connection? A principal motive for sharing in the preaching work is love—our love for God and our love for neighbor. Understandably for some Bible students, the thought of sharing in the preaching work may cause fear. But we can assure such students that with Jehovah’s help they will gradually be able to overcome the fear of man. (Ps. 18:1-3; Prov. 29:25) The box that accompanies this article describes what steps we can take to help our student to grow in his love for God. In addition, what can the congregation do to help new disciples to grow in showing love?

⁹ Think again of the illustration of the student driver. As he moves through traffic with the instructor at his side, in what ways is the student learning? By listening to his instructor and by observing other careful drivers. For instance, the instructor may point out a driver who kindly allows another to merge in front of him into traffic. Or he may call attention to a driver who courteously dims his car’s bright headlights so as not to blind other drivers. Such examples teach the student valuable lessons that he can apply when he is driving.

¹⁰ Similarly, a Bible student who begins to travel on the road to life learns not only from his teacher but also from the fine examples of other servants of Jehovah. Therefore, what will greatly help Bi-

ble students to make spiritual progress? Attending our Christian meetings. Why so? The Scriptural instruction given at the meetings will deepen their knowledge, strengthen their faith, and help them to grow in their love for God. (Acts 15:30-32) Furthermore, at the meetings the Bible teacher can introduce the student to brothers and sisters with whom he may have much in common. What examples of Christian love in action may the student see in the congregation? Consider the following scenarios.

¹¹ A Bible student who is a single parent observes a Christian sister who is in a similar situation. It touches the student’s heart to see how much effort the sister makes to come to the Kingdom Hall with her small children. A student who struggles to quit smoking gets acquainted with a publisher who had a similar struggle but was able to overcome it. The publisher tells the student how his own growing love for Jehovah moved him to obey God’s commandments. (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 4:13) After listening to the publisher’s personal story, the student feels more confident when the brother assures him, “You can quit too.” A young woman who is a Bible student notices a young sister who clearly enjoys her life as a Witness. What the Bible student notices about the young sister’s joyful disposition makes her want to learn more about why the sister always seems to be happy.

¹² When Bible students get to know a variety of faithful publishers, the

9. In the illustration of the student driver, in what ways is the student learning valuable lessons?

10. What will help a Bible student to make spiritual progress?

11. What examples may a student notice in the congregation, and what effect may they have on a student?

12. Why can we say that each one in the congregation has a role in helping Bible students?

students learn from their examples what it means to observe Christ's command to love God and neighbor. (John 13:35; 1 Tim. 4:12) Moreover, as previously noted, a Bible student can learn from publishers who deal with challenges that are similar to the ones the student faces. The student learns from such examples that the changes he needs to make to become a disciple of Christ are within reach. (Deut. 30:11) Each one in the congregation can contribute in various ways to the spiritual progress of Bible students. (Matt. 5:16) What efforts do you personally make to encourage Bible students who come to the meetings?

HELP INACTIVE ONES TO SHARE ONCE AGAIN

¹³ We want to help our inactive brothers and sisters to share once again in fulfilling Christ's commission to make disciples. The way Jesus treated his downhearted apostles shows what we may do today.

¹⁴ At the end of Jesus' ministry on earth when his death was imminent, the apostles "all abandoned him and fled." (Mark 14:50; John 16:32) How did Jesus treat his apostles when they were temporarily in a weakened condition? Shortly after his resurrection, Jesus told some of his followers: "Have no fear! Go, report to my brothers [that I was raised]." (Matt. 28:10a) Jesus did not give up on his apostles. Even though they had abandoned him, he still called them "my brothers." Like Jehovah, Jesus was merciful and forgiving.—2 Ki. 13:23.

13-14. How did Jesus treat his downhearted apostles?

¹⁵ Likewise, we have deep concern for those who have stopped sharing in the ministry. They are our brothers and sisters, and we love them! We still remember the labors of love that those fellow believers performed in the past—some perhaps for decades. (Heb. 6:10) We truly miss them! (Luke 15:4-7) In imitation of Jesus, in what ways may we express our concern for them?

¹⁶ ***Give a warm invitation.*** One way that Jesus encouraged his downhearted apostles was by inviting them to a meeting. (Matt. 28:10b; 1 Cor. 15:6) Similarly today, we can encourage inactive ones to attend the congregation meetings if they are not already doing so. We realize that we may need to invite them several times before they respond. Jesus no doubt was delighted that his disciples responded to his invitation.—Compare Matthew 28:16 and Luke 15:6.

¹⁷ ***Give a heartfelt welcome.*** Jesus made his disciples feel welcome when they met with him; he took the initiative to speak to them. (Matt. 28:18) How will we react when an inactive one arrives at the Kingdom Hall? We should take the initiative by warmly welcoming him. At first, we may worry that we will not know what to say. But without making him feel uncomfortable, we can simply tell him how happy we are to see him.

¹⁸ ***Give sincere reassurance.*** Jesus' disci-

15. How do we feel about those who have stopped sharing in the ministry?

16. How can we express our concern for our inactive brothers and sisters?

17. How should we react when an inactive one attends a meeting?

18. How can we reassure inactive publishers?

ples probably felt overwhelmed by the commission to preach in all the world. Jesus reassured his followers by saying: “I am with you all the days.” (Matt. 28:20) Was his approach effective? Yes. Before long, they were busy “teaching and declaring the good news.” (Acts 5:42) Inactive publishers also need reassurance. They may feel overwhelmed by the thought of preaching again. We can reassure them that they will not have to preach alone. When they are ready, we can accompany them in the ministry. They will no doubt appreciate our support as they begin preaching the good news once again. When we view and treat inactive ones as our brothers and sisters, we may see heartwarming results in our congregation.

WE WANT TO FINISH THE WORK ENTRUSTED TO US

¹⁹ Until when should we continue with disciple making? Throughout the conclusion of this system of things. (Matt. 28:20; see Glossary, “Conclusion of the system of things.”) Will we be able to fulfill this aspect of Jesus’ commission? We are determined to do so! We gladly give of our time, energy, and resources to find

19. What is our heartfelt desire, and why?

those who are “rightly disposed for everlasting life.” (Acts 13:48) When we do this, we follow Jesus’ example. He stated: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to *finish* his work.” (John 4:34; 17:4) That is also our heartfelt desire. We want to finish the work that has been entrusted to us. (John 20:21) And we want others, including inactive ones, to endure in this work with us.—Matt. 24:13.

²⁰ Granted, fulfilling Jesus’ great commission is a challenge. However, we are not facing this task alone. Jesus promised that he would be with us. We carry out the assignment to make disciples as “God’s fellow workers” and “in company with Christ.” (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 2:17) Therefore, we *can* accomplish it. What a privilege and pleasure it is to carry out this assignment and help others to do so as well!—**Read Philippians 4:13.**

20. According to Philippians 4:13, why can we accomplish the work that Jesus commanded us to do?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 4: The sister conducting the Bible study explains what steps the student needs to take to deepen her love for God. Later, the student applies the three suggestions that she received from her Bible teacher.

HOW CAN WE . . .

- help our Bible students to observe Jesus’ commands?
- encourage Bible students who attend meetings?
- help inactive ones to start preaching once again?

Rich Blessings for Those Who Return to Their Country of Origin

A GOOD number of brothers and sisters who in the past emigrated from developing countries to Western lands have returned to their country of origin. Motivated by love for Jehovah and for their fellow man, they have moved to areas where there is a need for more Kingdom publishers. (Matt. 22:37-39) What sacrifices did they make, and what blessings did they reap? To find out, let us focus on the country of Cameroon in western Africa.

“IN THE RIGHT PLACE FOR ‘FISHING’”

In 1998 a brother named **Onésime** emigrated from his native Cameroon. For 14 years he lived abroad. One day, at a Christian meeting, he heard an illustration about the preaching work. The speaker said, “If two friends were fishing in different spots and one was catching more fish than the other, would the friend who was catching little not move to the spot where the catch was bigger?”

That illustration made Onésime think about returning to the productive spiritual

fishing grounds in Cameroon to help the local publishers there. But he had concerns. Would he be able to adapt to his former home country after all those years living abroad? To find out, Onésime visited Cameroon for six months. Then in 2012, he moved back permanently.

Onésime relates: “I had to adjust to the hot weather and the living conditions. In the Kingdom Hall, I had to get used to sitting on bare benches again. But the more I concentrated on the program,” he says with a smile, “the more the memories of upholstered seats began to fade.”

In 2013, Onésime married **Géraldine**, who had returned to Cameroon after living in France for nine years. What blessings did the couple receive as a result of focusing their life on theocratic activities? Onésime says: “As a couple, we attended the School for Kingdom Evangelizers and served at Bethel. In the past year, 20 Bible students in our congregation got baptized. I feel that now I am in the right place for ‘fishing.’” (Mark 1:17, 18) Géraldine adds: “I have received more blessings than I could have imagined.”

THE JOY OF FINDING SPIRITUAL CHILDREN

Judith had moved to the United States but longed to expand her ministry. She relates, “At the end of every family visit to Cameroon, I cried because I had to leave behind several individuals with whom I had started a Bible study.” However, Judith hesitated to move back to Cameroon. She had



Onésime and Géraldine

a well-paying job that allowed her to pay for medical care that her father in Cameroon needed. Yet, trusting in Jehovah, Judith made the move. She admits that she missed some of the comforts she enjoyed while living abroad. She prayed to Jehovah to help her adjust and was helped by the encouragement she received from a circuit overseer and his wife.

Looking back, Judith says, “Within three years I had the joy of finding four spiritual children.” Judith started serving as a special pioneer. Today, she accompanies her husband, **Sam-Castel**, in the circuit work. But what happened with Judith’s father? She and her family were able to locate a hospital abroad that was willing to sponsor her father’s surgery. Happily, the surgery was a success.

EXPERIENCING JEHOVAH’S SUPPORT

A brother named **Victor** relocated to Canada. After reading a *Watchtower* article about higher education, he thought about his schooling. He switched from taking university courses to taking a shorter technical training course. “It allowed me to get a job sooner,” he says, “and to do what I had long wanted to do—pioneer.” Later, Victor got married to **Caroline**, and the couple visited Cameroon. There, during a visit to the branch office, they were encouraged to consider the possibility of serving in Cameroon. Victor says, “We found no reason to refuse, and since we had kept our life simple, we could accept the invitation.” Although Caroline had some health uncertainties, they decided to go ahead with the move.

Victor and Caroline began serving as regular pioneers to help care for the great interest found in the field. For a while they were able to live off their savings. After that they worked in Canada for a few months, which allowed them to return to Cameroon and to continue pioneering. What blessings



Judith and Sam-Castel

did they receive? They attended the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, served as special pioneers, and now serve as construction servants. Victor says, “Leaving our comfort zone allowed us to experience Jehovah’s support.”

THE JOY OF HELPING PEOPLE TO DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO JEHOVAH

In 2002, **Alain**, a university student in Germany, read the tract *Youths—What Will You Do With Your Life?* The information motivated him to set new goals. In 2006, he attended the Ministerial Training School and was assigned to Cameroon, his country of birth.

In Cameroon, Alain found part-time employment. Later, he found a better-paying job, but he was concerned that it would cause him to do less in the ministry. So when he was invited to serve as a special pioneer, he accepted without hesitation. His employer offered him a higher income, but Alain stuck to his decision. Later, Alain married **Stéphanie**, who had lived in France for years. What difficulties did she encounter after moving to Cameroon?

Stéphanie says: “I developed several minor ailments and allergies, but I managed to get regular treatment and find relief.” The couple were rewarded for their endurance. Alain relates: “When we went to preach in a remote village called Katé, we found several individuals who wanted to study the Bible.

How Did They Do It?

If you are considering returning to your country of origin, note what helped the brothers and sisters featured in this article.



A



B



C

A. Stéphanie and Alain
B. Léonce and Gisèle
C. Caroline and Victor

• What can you expect?

“Be prepared to face pressure and discouragement from well-meaning family and friends. Rely on Jehovah.”—Alain

• How can you prepare?

“I doubt that I have prayed so much in all my life.”—Gisèle

“I saved up so that I would not be financially dependent on someone else.”—Géraldine

“I had a complete physical checkup.”—Stéphanie

• How can you support yourself?

“Initially I lived off my savings. Then I started teaching at a high school, and later I learned how to make and sell soap.”—Géraldine

“We supplemented our income by making milk candies that we supplied to shops.”—Gisèle

“I worked online, translating documents.”—Onésime

• How can you stay safe?

“I chose a secure residence with easy access to nearby brothers and sisters.”—Géraldine

“I am always accompanied by someone while preaching.”—Gisèle

“I don’t go out alone at night. Also, I don’t display any valuables.”—Stéphanie

“I didn’t spread the news that I am from abroad, and to blend in I did things the way everyone else did.”—Judith

• What can you do to remain happy and productive?

“We learned to adapt. We kept in mind why we came and focused on the positives.”—Victor

“I had to cultivate contentment.”—Alain

Later, we were able to conduct Bible studies with them by phone. Two of these Bible students got baptized, and a group of publishers was formed.” St  phanie adds: “There is no greater joy than helping people to the point of dedicating themselves to Jehovah. By serving here, we have experienced that joy many times.” Today, Alain and St  phanie serve in the circuit work.

“WE DID EXACTLY WHAT WE NEEDED TO DO”

Gis  le got baptized while attending medical school in Italy. She was impressed by the simple life of the pioneer couple who taught her the Bible, and she wanted to do more in the ministry. So Gis  le began to serve as a regular pioneer while finishing her schooling.

Gis  le had a desire to do more in Jehovah’s service back in Cameroon, but she had concerns. She says, “I had to forfeit my Italian residency and be separated from friends and family who lived in Italy.” Even so, in May 2016, Gis  le moved back to Cameroon. Some time later, she married **L  once**, and the branch office in Cameroon recommended that the couple move to Ayos, a town with a great need for Kingdom preachers.

How was life in Ayos? Gis  le relates: “Often there was no electricity for weeks, and we could not charge our mobile phones. Much of the time, they did not work. I learned to cook on a wood fire, and we went with wheelbarrows and flashlights to fetch water at night when the spring was less crowded.” How did the couple cope? Gis  le says: “Jehovah’s spirit, a supportive marriage mate, and encouragement and occasional financial support from family and friends helped us through.”

Is Gis  le happy that she returned to her country of origin? “Yes! Without a shadow of a doubt,” she says. “There were initial

The Advantages of Serving in Your Country of Origin

“We already knew the local culture and mindset. People were less suspicious of us than of foreigners, and we could communicate more effectively.”—*Alain*

“We could move around more easily and get to places that are less accessible to foreigners.”—*St  phanie*

difficulties and feelings of discouragement, but once we overcame those, my husband and I felt that we did exactly what we needed to do. We trust in Jehovah and feel closer to him.” L  once and Gis  le attended the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, and they are now serving as temporary special pioneers.

Like fishermen who brave different conditions to get a good catch, those who return to their country of origin willingly make sacrifices to help righthearted ones who respond to the Kingdom message. Jehovah will no doubt remember these hard-working publishers favorably for the love they have shown for his name. (Neh. 5:19; Heb. 6:10) If you are living abroad and there is a need for Kingdom publishers in your country of origin, would you be able to return? If you do so, rich blessings await you. —Prov. 10:22.

SONG 55

Fear Them Not!

PREVIEW

This article considers three ways in which Jehovah helped the apostle Paul to deal with difficult challenges. Reviewing how Jehovah proved to be a Helper in the past will strengthen our confidence that Jehovah will help us today as we pass through the storms of life.

Take Courage —Jehovah Is Your Helper

“I will never leave you, and I will never abandon you.”

—HEB. 13:5.

HAVE you ever felt that you were all alone, that you had no one to help you deal with a challenge you faced? Many have felt that way, including faithful servants of Jehovah. (1 Ki. 19:14) If that ever happens to you, remember Jehovah’s promise: “I will never leave you, and I will never abandon you.” So we can say with confidence: “Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid.” (Heb. 13:5, 6) The apostle Paul wrote those words to fellow believers in Judea about 61 C.E. His words remind us of the sentiments expressed at **Psalms 118:5-7.—Read.**

² Like the psalmist, Paul knew from personal experience that Jehovah was his Helper. For instance, over two years before he wrote his letter to the Hebrews, Paul made a dangerous journey through a storm-tossed sea. (Acts 27:4, 15, 20) Throughout that journey and during the time leading up to it, Jehovah proved to be Paul’s Helper in various ways. We will consider three of them. Jehovah provided help by means of Jesus and the angels, individuals in authority, and fellow believers. Reviewing these events in Paul’s life will deepen our trust in God’s promise that He will also respond to our calls for help.

HELP FROM JESUS AND THE ANGELS

³ Paul needed help. About 56 C.E., a crowd dragged

1. What will comfort us when we feel alone or overwhelmed by our problems? (Psalm 118:5-7)
2. What will we consider in this article, and why?
3. What may Paul have wondered, and why?

him outside the temple in Jerusalem and tried to kill him. The next day, when Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin, he was almost torn apart by his enemies. (Acts 21:30-32; 22:30; 23:6-10) At that point, Paul may have wondered, ‘How much longer can I endure this treatment?’

4 What help did Paul receive? The night after Paul was arrested, “the Lord,” Jesus, stood by him and said: “Take courage! For just as you have been giving a thorough witness about me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome.” (Acts 23:11) What timely encouragement! Jesus commended Paul for the witness he had given in Jerusalem. And he promised that Paul would safely reach Rome, where he would give a further witness. After receiving that assurance, Paul must have felt as secure as a child nestled in his father’s arms.

5 What other challenges did Paul face? About two years after those events in Jerusalem, Paul was on a ship heading for Italy when the vessel encountered such a heavy storm that the crew and passengers thought they would die. Yet, Paul was not afraid. Why? He told those aboard: “This night an angel of the God to whom I belong and to whom I render sacred service stood by me and said: ‘Have no fear, Paul. You must stand before Caesar, and look! God has granted to you all those sailing with you.’” Jehovah had used an angel to repeat the assurance that He had given Paul earlier

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4. How did Jehovah help Paul by means of Jesus?
 5. How did Jehovah help Paul by means of an angel? (See cover picture.)



Angels give us support and guidance
 as we share in the preaching work
 (See paragraph 7)

by means of Jesus. And, indeed, Paul reached Rome.—Acts 27:20-25; 28:16.

6 What help do we receive? Jesus will support us, as he did Paul. For example, Jesus promises all those who follow him: “I am with you *all* the days until the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matt. 28:20) Jesus’ words are a source of strength for us. Why? Because some days are difficult for us to endure. For instance, when a loved one dies, we must deal with that pain not just for a few days but likely for many years. Others must deal with the difficult days that come with old age. Still others face days on which they are overwhelmed by feelings of depression. Even so, we find the strength to

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6. What promise of Jesus can strengthen us, and why?

go on because we know that Jesus is with us “*all* the days,” including the darkest days, of our life.—Matt. 11:28-30.

⁷ God’s Word assures us that Jehovah helps us by means of his angels. (Heb. 1:7, 14) For example, angels give us support and guidance as we preach the “good news of the Kingdom” to people of “every nation and tribe and tongue.” —Matt. 24:13, 14; **read Revelation 14:6.**

HELP FROM INDIVIDUALS IN AUTHORITY

⁸ *What help did Paul receive?* Back in 56 C.E., Jesus assured Paul that he would reach Rome. However, some Jews in Jerusalem planned to ambush Paul and kill him. When the Roman military commander Claudius Lysias learned about the plan, he came to Paul’s rescue. Quickly, Claudius sent Paul—protected by many soldiers—to Caesarea, along a route that was about 65 miles (105 km) from Jerusalem. In Caesarea, Governor Felix ordered that Paul “be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.” Paul was out of the reach of the would-be murderers. —Acts 23:12-35.

⁹ Two years later, Paul was still in custody in Caesarea. Felix had been succeeded as governor by Festus. The Jews begged Festus to have Paul come to Jerusalem to stand trial, but Festus refused. Perhaps the governor was aware that the Jews had been “planning to ambush Paul and kill him along the road.” —Acts 24:27–25:5.

7. According to Revelation 14:6, how does Jehovah help us today?

8. How did Jehovah help Paul by means of a military commander?

9. How did Governor Festus help Paul?

¹⁰ Later, Paul’s trial was held in Caesarea. Since Festus wanted “to gain favor with the Jews,” he asked Paul: “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and be judged before me there?” Paul knew that he would probably be killed in Jerusalem, and he also knew what he could do to save his life, reach Rome, and carry out his ministry. He said: “I appeal to Caesar!” After consulting his counselors, Festus told Paul: “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you will go.” Festus’ favorable decision rescued Paul from his enemies. In time, Paul would be in Rome—far out of the reach of the Jews who were seeking to kill him.—Acts 25:6-12.

¹¹ While Paul was waiting to begin his voyage to Italy, he may well have reflected on a warning that the prophet Isaiah was inspired to give to those opposing Jehovah: “Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted! Say what you like, but it will not succeed, for God is with us!” (Isa. 8: 10) Paul knew that God would help him, and this must have strengthened him as he faced the trials that were to come.

¹² In 58 C.E., Paul began his voyage to Italy. Being a prisoner, he was placed under the authority of a Roman army officer named Julius. From that moment on, Julius had the power to make Paul’s life miserable or to make it bearable. How would he use his authority? The next day when they landed ashore,

10. How did Governor Festus respond to Paul’s appeal to be judged by Caesar?

11. Paul may have reflected on what reassuring words given by Isaiah?

12. How did Julius treat Paul, and what may Paul have discerned as a result?



As he did in the past, Jehovah may move people in authority today to protect his servants
(See paragraphs 12-13)

“Julius treated Paul with kindness and permitted him to go to his friends.” Later on, Julius even saved Paul’s life. How? The soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners who were on the ship, but Julius stopped them. Why? He “was determined to bring Paul safely through.” Likely, Paul discerned Jehovah’s guidance in the actions of that kindhearted officer.—Acts 27:1-3, 42-44.

13 What help do we receive? When it is in harmony with his purpose, Jehovah may use his powerful holy spirit to cause people in authority to do what he desires. King Solomon wrote: “A king’s heart is like streams of water in Jehovah’s hand. He directs it wherever He pleases.” (Prov. 21:1) What does this proverb mean? Humans can dig a canal to divert the water of a stream in a direction that fits their plans. Similarly, Jehovah can use his spirit to divert the thoughts of rulers in a direction that is in harmony with his purpose. When that occurs, people in authority feel motivated to make decisions that benefit God’s people.—Compare Ezra 7:21, 25, 26.

13. How may Jehovah use people in authority?

14 What can we do? We can pray “concerning kings and all those who are in positions of authority” when these individuals are called on to make decisions that affect our Christian life and ministry. (1 Tim. 2:1, 2, ftn.; Neh. 1: 11) As the first-century Christians did, we too pray intensely to God for our brothers and sisters who are in prison. (**Read Acts 12:5; Heb. 13:3**) Further, we can pray concerning prison guards who are in charge of our brothers and sisters. We can beg Jehovah to influence the thoughts of such individuals so that they may be moved to act like Julius and treat our imprisoned fellow believers “with human kindness.”—See study note on Acts 27:3.

HELP FROM FELLOW BELIEVERS

15 What help did Paul receive? During his journey to Rome, Paul time and again received help that Jehovah provided by means of his fellow believers. Let us consider some examples.

14. In line with Acts 12:5, concerning whom can we pray?

15-16. How did Jehovah help Paul by means of Aristarchus and Luke?

¹⁶ Two faithful companions of Paul, Aristarchus and Luke, decided to travel with him to Rome.* They willingly risked their lives to be with Paul, although it does not appear that either of them had received a personal assurance from Jesus that they would reach Rome. Only later, during the rough voyage, did they learn that their lives would be spared. Therefore, when Aristarchus and Luke boarded the ship in Caesarea, Paul must have offered a heartfelt prayer to Jehovah, thanking him for the help that he had provided by means of these two courageous fellow believers.—Acts 27:1, 2, 20-25.

¹⁷ During his journey, Paul was several times helped by his fellow believers. For instance, in the port city of Sidon,

* Aristarchus and Luke had previously been Paul's traveling companions. These trusted men also remained with Paul during his imprisonment in Rome.—Acts 16:10-12; 20:4; Col. 4:10, 14.

17. How did Jehovah help Paul by means of his fellow believers?

Julius permitted Paul “to go to his friends and enjoy their care.” And later, in the city of Puteoli, Paul and his companions “found brothers and were urged to remain with them for seven days.” While the Christians in those places cared for the needs of Paul and his companions, Paul no doubt brought great joy to his hosts by sharing upbuilding experiences. (Compare Acts 15:2, 3.) After being refreshed, Paul and his companions continued the journey.—Acts 27:3; 28:13, 14.

¹⁸ As Paul walked toward Rome, he must have thought about what he had written three years earlier to the congregation in that city: “For many years I have longed to come to you.” (Rom. 15:23) However, he had not anticipated that he would be arriving as a prisoner. How encouraged he must have been when he saw brothers from Rome waiting along the road to greet him! “On

18. What prompted Paul to thank God and take courage?



Like Paul, we receive Jehovah's help by means of fellow believers
(See paragraphs 18-19)

catching sight of them, Paul thanked God and took courage.” (Acts 28:15) Note that Paul thanked God for the presence of the brothers. Why? Because Paul again saw Jehovah helping him by means of fellow believers.

¹⁹ **What can we do?** Do you know of brothers or sisters in your congregation who are suffering distress because they are ill or are facing other challenging circumstances? Or maybe they have lost a loved one in death. If we become aware of an individual in need, we can ask Jehovah to help us to say or do something kind and loving. Our words and actions may be just the encouragement that our brother or sister needs. **(Read 1 Peter 4:10.)*** Those whom we help may regain

* See *The Watchtower*, January 15, 2009, pp. 13-14, pars. 5-9.

19. As stated at 1 Peter 4:10, how may Jehovah use us as a means to convey his help to those in need?

full confidence that Jehovah’s promise, “I will never leave you, and I will never abandon you,” applies to them. Would that not make you feel joyful?

²⁰ As was the case with Paul and his companions, we in effect go through violent storms on our journey through life. At the same time, we know that we can take courage because Jehovah is with us. He gives us help by means of Jesus and the angels. Also, if it is in harmony with his purpose, Jehovah can help us by means of people in authority. And as many of us have personally experienced, Jehovah uses his holy spirit to stir the hearts of his servants to come to the aid of their Christian brothers and sisters. Therefore, like Paul, we have good reason to say with confidence: “Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”—Heb. 13:6.

20. Why can we say with confidence: “Jehovah is my helper”?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| ■ What help do we receive from Jesus and the angels? | ■ What can we mention in prayer concerning those “in positions of authority”? | ■ How can we help fellow believers who are in need? |
|--|---|---|

SONG 54

“This Is the Way”

PREVIEW

Some of us may find it difficult to make changes in our thinking, attitude, and actions. This article will explain why we all need to make adjustments and how we can keep our joy when making them.

Will You Continue to Be Readjusted?

“Finally, brothers, continue to rejoice, to be readjusted.”

—2 COR. 13:11.

ALL of us are on a journey. Our destination, or goal, is to live in the new world under Jehovah’s loving rulership. Each day, we try to follow the path that leads to life. But as Jesus said, that road is cramped and at times difficult to follow. **(Read Matthew 7:13, 14.)** We are imperfect, and it is easy for us to stray from this path.—Gal. 6:1.

² If we are to stay on the cramped road to life, we must be willing to adjust our thinking, attitude, and actions. The apostle Paul encouraged Christians living in Corinth to continue “to be readjusted.” (2 Cor. 13:11) That counsel also applies to us. In this article, we will discuss how the Bible can help us to adjust our steps and how mature friends can help us to stay on the path to life. We will also consider when it might be a challenge to follow direction given by Jehovah’s organization. We will see how humility can help us to change our course without losing our joy in serving Jehovah.

ALLOW GOD’S WORD TO CORRECT YOU

³ When we try to examine our own thoughts and feelings, we face a challenge. Our heart is treacherous, and that can make it difficult for us to know where it might be leading us. (Jer. 17:9) It is easy to deceive ourselves with “false reasoning.” (Jas. 1:22) So we must use God’s Word to examine ourselves. God’s Word reveals what we are on the inside, the innermost “thoughts and intentions” of our heart. (Heb. 4:12, 13) In a sense, God’s Word acts like

1. According to Matthew 7:13, 14, in what sense are we on a journey?
2. What will we consider in this article? (See also the box “Humility Helps Us to Adjust Our Steps.”)
3. What can God’s Word do for you?

Humility Helps Us to Adjust Our Steps



MATURE FRIENDS

A mature fellow Christian may give us a kind warning. Are we grateful that our friend had the courage to speak up?
(See paragraph 9)



GOD'S ORGANIZATION

God's organization provides publications, videos, and meetings that help us to apply counsel from God's Word. At times, the Governing Body makes adjustments in the way the work is organized
(See paragraph 14)



GOD'S WORD

God's Word warns us when we stray off the path. If we are humble, we allow God's Word to correct our wrong thinking
(See paragraph 7)



an X-ray machine, enabling us to see what is inside. But we must be humble if we are to benefit from the counsel we receive from the Bible or from God's representatives.

⁴ The example of King Saul shows what can happen when we lack humility. Saul became so proud that he would not admit, even to himself, that his thinking and actions needed to be adjusted. (Ps. 36:1, 2; Hab. 2:4) This became evident when Jehovah gave Saul specific direction on what he should do after he defeated the Amalekites. Saul, however, did not obey Jehovah. And when the prophet Samuel confronted him about the matter, Saul did not acknowledge his mistake. Instead, he tried to justify his actions by minimizing the consequences of his disobedience and shifting the blame to others. (1 Sam. 15:13-24) Earlier, Saul had displayed a similar attitude. (1 Sam. 13:10-14) Sadly, he allowed his heart to become haughty. He did not correct his thinking, so Jehovah reproved him and rejected him.

⁵ To learn from Saul's example, we do well to ask ourselves these questions: 'When I read counsel from God's Word, do I tend to justify my thinking? Do I minimize the consequences of disobedience? Do I shift the blame for my actions to someone else?' If our answer to any of those questions is yes, we must adjust our thinking and attitude. Otherwise, our heart can become so haughty that Jehovah will reject us as his friend.—Jas. 4:6.

4. What indicates that King Saul became a proud man?

5. What can we learn from Saul's example?

⁶ Note the contrast between King Saul and his successor, King David, a man who loved "the law of Jehovah." (Ps. 1:1-3) David knew that Jehovah saves those who are humble but opposes the haughty. (2 Sam. 22:28) So David allowed God's law to adjust his thinking. He wrote: "I will praise Jehovah, who has given me advice. Even during the night, my innermost thoughts correct me."—Ps. 16:7.

⁷ If we are humble, we will allow God's Word to correct our wrong thinking before we act on those thoughts. God's Word will be like a voice that tells us: "This is the way. Walk in it." It will warn us when we are straying from the path—to the left or to the right. (Isa. 30:21) By listening to Jehovah, we will benefit ourselves in a number of ways. (Isa. 48:17) For instance, we will avoid the embarrassment of having to be corrected by someone else. And we will draw closer to Jehovah because we recognize that he is treating us like a beloved child.—Heb. 12:7.

⁸ God's Word can act as a mirror for us. **(Read James 1:22-25.)** Most of us look in a mirror each morning before we leave home. That way, we can see if we need to make an adjustment before others see us. Similarly, when we read the Bible each day, we will see ways that we can adjust our thinking and our attitude. Many find it helpful to read the daily text each morning before they leave home. They allow what they read to affect their think-

6. Describe the contrast between King Saul and King David.

7. What will we do if we are humble?

8. As mentioned at James 1:22-25, how can we use God's Word as a mirror?

ing. Then throughout the day, they look for ways to apply the counsel from God's Word. In addition, we must have a study routine that includes reading and thinking about God's Word each day. This may sound simple, but it is one of the most important things we can do to help us stay on the cramped road to life.

LISTEN TO MATURE FRIENDS

⁹ Have you ever started to walk on a path that was leading you away from Jehovah? (Ps. 73:2, 3) If a mature friend had the courage to correct you, did you listen to him and apply his advice? If so, you did the right thing, and you are no doubt grateful that your friend warned you.—Prov. 1:5.

¹⁰ God's Word reminds us: "The wounds inflicted by a friend are faithful." (Prov. 27:6) In what way is this statement true? Consider this illustration: Imagine that you are waiting to cross a busy street and you get distracted by your cell phone. You step onto the street without looking up. Just then, a friend grabs your arm and pulls you back onto the sidewalk. His grip is so firm that your arm is bruised, but his quick action saves you from being hit by a car. Even if the bruise he inflicted causes you pain for several days, would you be offended that your friend grabbed you? Certainly not! You would be grateful for his help. Similarly, if a friend warns you that your speech or actions are not in harmony with God's righteous standards, you may feel hurt at first. But do not resent his counsel or become offended. That would be foolish.

9. When might a friend have to correct you?

10. How should you react if a friend corrects you?

(Eccl. 7:9) Instead, be grateful that your friend had the courage to speak up.

¹¹ What could cause someone to reject good counsel from a loving friend? Pride. Proud people like "to have their ears tickled." They "turn away from listening to the truth." (2 Tim. 4:3, 4) They have an inflated view of their own opinion and worth. However, the apostle Paul wrote: "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deceiving himself." (Gal. 6:3) King Solomon summed up the matter well. He wrote: "Better is a poor but wise child than an old but stupid king, who no longer has enough sense to heed a warning."—Eccl. 4:13.

¹² Note the example set by the apostle Peter when he was publicly corrected by the apostle Paul. (**Read Galatians 2:11-14.**) Peter could have resented what Paul said, focusing on the way he said it and where he chose to say it. But Peter was wise. He accepted the counsel and did not nurse a grudge against Paul. Instead, he later referred to Paul as a "beloved brother."—2 Pet. 3:15.

¹³ If you ever feel that you need to give counsel to a friend, what points should you keep in mind? Before you approach your friend, ask yourself, 'Am I being "overly righteous"?' (Eccl. 7:16) An overly righteous person judges others, not by Jehovah's standards, but by his own, and he is probably not very merciful. If after examining yourself you still see the need to speak to your friend, clearly

11. What could cause someone to reject good counsel from a friend?

12. What do we learn from the example set by the apostle Peter, as recorded at Galatians 2:11-14?

13. What points should we keep in mind when offering counsel?



Before giving counsel . . .

- ask yourself, ‘Is the counsel really necessary?’

When giving counsel . . .

- clearly identify the problem
- base the counsel on God’s Word
- imitate Jesus’ compassionate way

(See paragraph 13)

identify the problem and use viewpoint questions to help your friend to recognize his mistake. Make sure that what you say is based on the Scriptures, remembering that your friend is accountable, not to you, but to Jehovah. (Rom. 14: 10) Rely on the wisdom found in God’s Word, and when counseling someone, imitate Jesus’ compassion. (Prov. 3:5; Matt. 12:20) Why? Because Jehovah will deal with us in the same way that we deal with others.—Jas. 2:13.

FOLLOW DIRECTION GIVEN BY GOD’S ORGANIZATION

¹⁴ Jehovah guides us on the road to life by means of the earthly part of his organization, which provides videos, publications, and meetings that help all of us apply the counsel contained in God’s Word. This material is solidly based on the Scriptures. When deciding how the preaching work can best be accomplished, the Governing Body relies on holy spirit. Still, the Governing Body regularly reviews its own decisions about

how the work is organized. Why? Because “the scene of this world is changing,” and God’s organization must adapt to new circumstances.—1 Cor. 7:31.

¹⁵ No doubt, we readily follow the Bible-based direction we receive regarding doctrinal or moral matters. But how do we react when God’s organization makes a change that affects other aspects of our life? For example, in recent years the cost of building and maintaining places of worship has increased dramatically. So the Governing Body has directed that Kingdom Halls be used to capacity. As a result of this adjustment, congregations have been merged and some Kingdom Halls have been sold. The funds are being used to help build halls in areas that need them the most. If you live in an area where halls are being sold and congregations are being merged, you may find it a challenge to adapt to the new circumstances. Some publishers now have to travel farther to attend meetings. Others who worked hard to build or maintain a Kingdom Hall

14. What does God’s organization provide for us?

15. What challenge have some publishers faced?

may wonder why that hall is now being sold. They may feel that their time and effort were wasted. Still, they are cooperating with this new arrangement and should be commended.

¹⁶ We will maintain our joy if we remember that we are working for Jehovah and that he is directing his organization. **(Read Colossians 3:23, 24.)** King David set a good example when donating funds to build the temple. He said: “Who am I and who are my people that we should be in a position to make voluntary offerings like this? For everything is from you, and we have given to you what comes from your own hand.” (1 Chron. 29:14) When we donate funds, we too are giving to Jehovah what has come from his own hand. Even so, Jehovah appreciates the time, energy, and resources that we donate to support the work he wants done.—2 Cor. 9:7.

STAY ON THE CRAMPED ROAD

¹⁷ To stay on the cramped road to life,

16. How will applying the counsel found at Colossians 3:23, 24 help us to maintain our joy?

17. Why should you not feel discouraged if you have to adjust your steps?

all of us must follow Jesus’ steps closely. (1 Pet. 2:21) If it seems that you have to adjust your steps, do not be discouraged. That may actually be a good sign, showing that you are sensitive to Jehovah’s direction. Remember that Jehovah does not expect us—as imperfect as we are at present—to imitate Jesus’ example perfectly.

¹⁸ May all of us focus on the future and be willing to adjust our thinking, attitude, and actions. (Prov. 4:25; Luke 9:62) Let us remain humble, “continue to rejoice, to be readjusted.” (2 Cor. 13:11) If we do that, “the God of love and of peace will be with [us].” And we will not only reach our destination but also enjoy the journey.

18. What must we do to reach our goal?

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 22: As the younger brother relates what happened to him after he made a poor decision, the older brother (on the right) listens calmly to determine if he needs to give some counsel.

HOW WILL HUMILITY HELP US TO . . .

- correct our thinking and actions?
- accept correction from others?
- follow direction given by God’s organization?

SONG 77

Light in a Darkened World

PREVIEW

It can be good to remember our past. But we do not want to become so focused on our past that we fail to make the most of the present or forget what will happen in the future. This article discusses three traps that could cause us to live in the past. We will consider Bible principles and modern-day examples that can help us to avoid all these traps.

“Look Straight Ahead” to the Future

*“Your eyes should look straight ahead, yes,
fix your gaze straight ahead of you.”—PROV. 4:25.*

IMAGINE the following scenarios. An elderly Christian sister reflects on good times from her past. Even though her life is more challenging now, she continues to do all she can for Jehovah. (1 Cor. 15:58) Every day she imagines herself and her loved ones living together in the promised new world. Another sister remembers that she was hurt by a fellow believer, but she chooses to let go of her resentment. (Col. 3:13) A brother is keenly aware of his past mistakes but focuses on staying faithful from now on.—Ps. 51:10.

² What do these three Christians have in common? All of them remember what happened in their past, but they are not living in it. Rather, they “look straight ahead” to the future.—**Read Proverbs 4:25.**

³ Why is it important to “look straight ahead” to the future? Just as a person cannot walk in a straight line if he is constantly looking back, we cannot move forward in our service to Jehovah if we are constantly looking back on our past.—Luke 9:62.

⁴ In this article, we will discuss three traps that could cause us to live in the past.* They are: (1) nostalgia,

* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** In this article, “to live in the past” means to keep thinking about our past—talking about it constantly, reliving it, or thinking that our life was better then.

1-2. How can we follow the advice found at Proverbs 4:25? Give an example.

3. Why do we need to “look straight ahead” to the future?

4. What will we discuss in this article?

(2) resentment, and (3) excessive guilt. In each case, we will see how Bible principles can help us, not to dwell on “the things behind,” but to stretch forward to “the things ahead.”—Phil. 3:13.

THE TRAP OF NOSTALGIA

⁵ **Read Ecclesiastes 7:10.** Notice that this verse does not say that it is wrong to ask: “Why were the former days *good*?” Good memories are a gift from Jehovah. Rather, the verse reads: “Do not say, ‘Why were the former days *better* than these?’” In other words, the trap lies in comparing our earlier circumstances with our present circumstances and concluding that everything is worse now. Another Bible translation renders this verse: “Never ask, ‘Oh, why were things so much better in the old days?’ It’s not an intelligent question.”

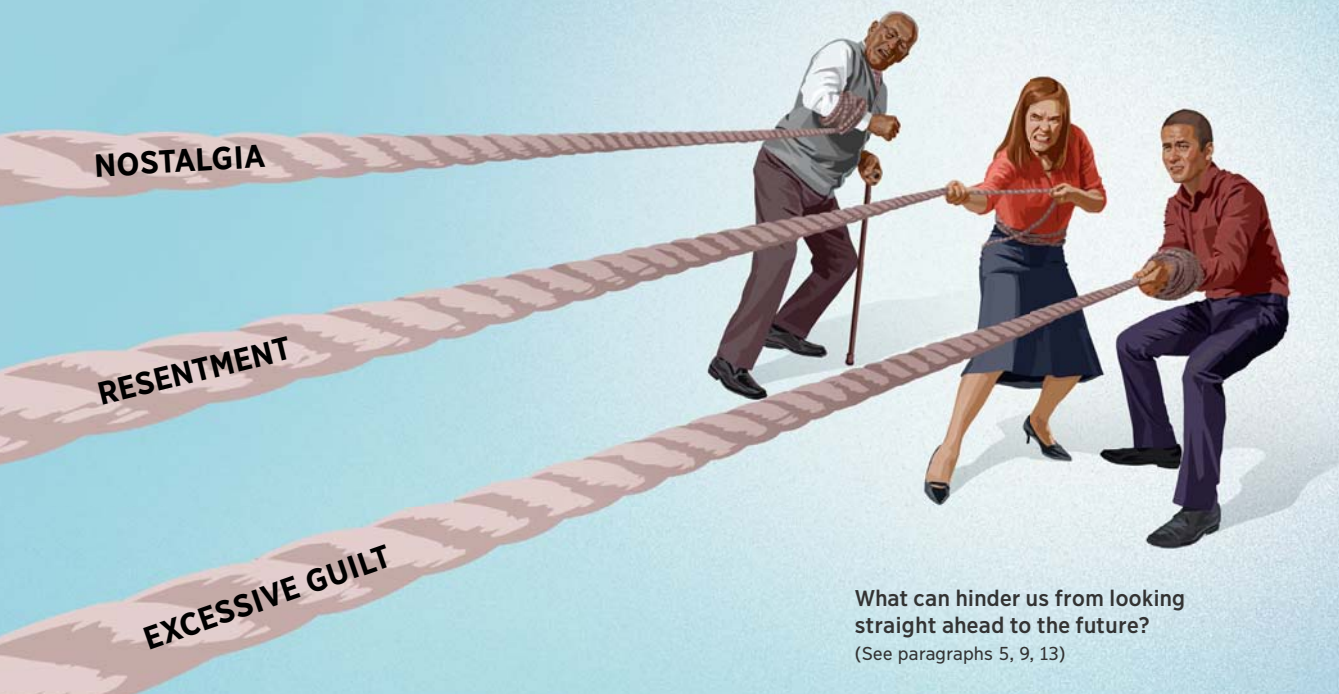
5. What trap does Ecclesiastes 7:10 warn us against?

⁶ Why is it unwise to keep thinking that our life was better in the past? Nostalgia can cause us to remember only good things from our past. Or it can cause us to minimize the hardships we used to face. Consider, for example, the ancient Israelites. After leaving Egypt, they quickly forgot how hard their life had been there. Instead, they focused on the good food they had enjoyed. They said: “How fondly we remember the fish that we used to eat without cost in Egypt, also the cucumbers, the watermelons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic!” (Num. 11:5) But was it really “without cost” that they ate that food? No. The Israelites paid a heavy price; at the time, they were being severely oppressed as slaves in Egypt. (Ex. 1:13, 14; 3:6-9) Yet, they later forgot about those hardships and longed for the past. They chose to focus on “the good old

6. Why is it unwise to keep thinking that our life was better in the past? Give an example.



After leaving Egypt,
what mistake did the
Israelites make?
(See paragraph 6)



What can hinder us from looking straight ahead to the future?
(See paragraphs 5, 9, 13)

days” instead of focusing on the positive things that Jehovah had just done for them. Jehovah was not pleased with their attitude.—Num. 11:10.

⁷ How can we avoid the trap of nostalgia? Consider the example of a sister who began serving at Brooklyn Bethel in 1945. Some years later, she married a fellow Bethelite, and they served there together for many years. However, in the mid-1970’s, her husband became ill. She said that when he realized that his death was near, he gave her some good advice to help her cope with widowhood. He said to her: “We’ve had a happy marriage. Many people never experience that.” But he also urged her: “Don’t live in the past—although your memories will continue. Time will help you to heal. Don’t become bitter and feel sorry

for yourself. Be glad you had these joys and blessings. . . . Memories are God’s gift to us.” Do you not agree that this was good advice?

⁸ Our sister took those words to heart. She served Jehovah faithfully until her death at the age of 92. Some years earlier, she said: “Looking back over 63 years in the full-time service of Jehovah, I can say that mine has truly been a satisfying life.” Why? She explained: “What really makes life satisfying is our wonderful brotherhood and the hope of living with our brothers and sisters on a paradise earth, serving our Grand Creator, the only true God, Jehovah, for all eternity.”* What an excellent example of someone who looked straight ahead to the future!

* See *The Watchtower*, July 1, 2004, pp. 23-29.

7. What helped one sister to avoid the trap of nostalgia?

8. How did our sister benefit from not living in the past?

THE TRAP OF RESENTMENT

9 Read Leviticus 19:18. We often find it hard to let go of resentment if the person who treated us wrongly is a fellow believer, a close friend, or a relative. For example, a sister was wrongly accused by a fellow believer of stealing money from her. Later, the accusing sister apologized, but the sister who had been wrongly accused continued to focus on what had happened. Have you ever felt like that? Even if we have not faced that same situation, most of us have likely felt resentful and have believed that we could never let go of our resentment.

10 What can help us when we feel resentful? For one thing, remember that Jehovah sees everything. He is aware of all that we go through, including any injustices we experience. (Heb. 4:13) He feels for us when we suffer. (Isa. 63:9) And he promises that he will eventually undo any harm that resulted from injustices we suffered.—Rev. 21:3, 4.

11 We also want to remember that when we let go of resentment, we benefit ourselves. That is what the wrongly accused sister came to realize. In time, she was able to let go of her resentment. She recognized that when we forgive others, Jehovah forgives us. (Matt. 6:14) She did not minimize or excuse what her fellow believer had done, but she chose to let go of resentment. As a result, our sister was happier and was able to focus on her service to Jehovah.

9. As referred to at Leviticus 19:18, when may we especially find it hard to let go of resentment?

10. What can help us when we feel resentful?

11. How do we benefit ourselves when we let go of resentment?

THE TRAP OF EXCESSIVE GUILT

12 Read 1 John 3:19, 20. Feelings of guilt are not unusual. For example, some feel guilty because of things they did before they learned the truth. Others feel guilty because of mistakes they made after baptism. Such feelings are common. (Rom. 3:23) Of course, we want to do what is right. But “we all stumble many times.” (Jas. 3:2; Rom. 7:21-23) Although we do not enjoy feeling guilty, it can do us some good. Why? Because feelings of guilt can move us to correct our course and to be determined not to repeat our mistakes.—Heb. 12:12, 13.

13 On the other hand, it is possible to feel *excessive* guilt—that is, to continue to feel guilty even after we have repented and Jehovah has shown that he has forgiven us. That type of guilt can be harmful. (Ps. 31:10; 38:3, 4) How so? Consider the example of one sister who struggled with guilt over her past sins. She said: “I felt that I might as well not exert myself in Jehovah’s service because it’s probably too late for me anyway.” Many of us can relate to this sister’s feelings. It is vital that we guard against the trap of excessive guilt. After all, just think how happy it would make Satan if we were to give up on ourselves—even though Jehovah has not given up on us!—Compare 2 Corinthians 2:5-7, 11.

14 Still, we may wonder, ‘How can I know for sure that Jehovah has not given up on me?’ In a sense, by asking that

12. What does 1 John 3:19, 20 acknowledge?

13. Why do we need to guard against excessive guilt?

14. How can we be sure that Jehovah has not given up on us?

question, we also answer it. Decades ago, *The Watchtower* stated: “We [may] find ourselves stumbling and falling many times over some bad habit that has bitten more deeply into our former pattern of life than we had realized. . . . Do not despair. Do not conclude you have committed the unforgivable sin. That is just how Satan would like you to reason. The fact that you feel grieved and vexed with yourself is proof in itself that you have not gone too far. Never weary of turning humbly and earnestly to God, seeking his forgiveness and cleansing and help. Go to him as a child goes to his father when in trouble, no matter how often on the same weakness, and Jehovah will graciously give you the help because of his undeserved kindness.”*

¹⁵ Many of Jehovah’s people have found comfort in realizing that Jehovah

* See *The Watchtower*, February 15, 1954, p. 123.

15-16. How have some felt when they realized that Jehovah had not given up on them?

had not given up on them. For example, some years ago, one brother was moved by an experience published in the series “The Bible Changes Lives.” In the article, a sister acknowledged that because of her past experiences, it was difficult for her to believe that Jehovah could love her. She struggled with those feelings even years after she got baptized. However, as she meditated on the ransom, she began to see things differently.*

¹⁶ How did her experience affect the brother? He wrote: “When I was young, I fought an addiction to pornography. Recently, I suffered a relapse. I’ve sought the help of Christian elders, and I’ve made progress in overcoming my problem. The elders have assured me of God’s love and mercy. Yet, at times, I still feel worthless, as if Jehovah couldn’t possibly love me. Reading [this sister’s] experience really helped. I now realize that when I think God couldn’t possibly

* See *The Watchtower*, August 1, 2011, pp. 20-21.

Let us be determined
to live for the future
(See paragraphs 18-19)



forgive me, in essence I'm saying that his Son's sacrifice is not enough to cover my sins. I've clipped out this article so that I can read and meditate on it whenever feelings of worthlessness well up within me."

¹⁷ Experiences like these remind us of the apostle Paul. Before becoming a Christian, he committed a number of serious sins. Paul remembered what he had done, but he did not dwell on it. (1 Tim. 1:12-15) He viewed the ransom as a personal gift to him. (Gal. 2:20) Paul thus avoided the trap of excessive guilt and focused on giving Jehovah his best from that point forward.

LIVE FOR THE FUTURE!

¹⁸ What have we learned from examining the traps discussed in this article? (1) Good memories are a blessing from Jehovah; but no matter how good our life was in the past, our future in the new world will be better. (2) Others may hurt us, but when we choose to forgive, we

17. How did the apostle Paul avoid the trap of excessive guilt?

18. What have we learned in this article?

are able to move forward. (3) Excessive guilt can prevent us from serving Jehovah with joy. So, like Paul, we need to believe that Jehovah has forgiven us.

¹⁹ We have the prospect of living forever. And in God's new world, we will not be plagued with regrets about the past. Regarding that time, the Bible says: "The former things will not be called to mind." (Isa. 65:17) Just think: Some of us have grown old in Jehovah's service, but in the new world, we will be young again. (Job 33:25) Let us, therefore, be determined not to live in the past. Rather, let us look to the future and live for what is ahead!

19. How do we know that in the new world we will not be plagued with regrets about the past?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 26:** Feelings of nostalgia, resentment, and excessive guilt are like heavy burdens that we drag along and that hinder us from walking forward on the road to life.

Page 28: After we let go of these burdensome feelings, we feel relieved and happy, and we have renewed strength. Then we will be able to look ahead.

WHAT CAN HELP US TO AVOID THE TRAP OF . . .

■ nostalgia?

■ resentment?

■ excessive guilt?

“Jehovah Has Kept Me in His Thoughts”

AS TOLD BY MARK HERMAN



MY HOME is in Orealla, an Amerindian village of about 2,000 people in Guyana, South America. The village is isolated; you can reach it only by small airplane or by boat.

I was born in 1983. The first years of my life, I had a normal childhood, but when I was ten years old, I began to feel severe pains throughout my body. About two years later, I woke up one morning and could not move. No matter how hard I tried to move my legs, there was no strength in them. Since that day, I have not walked again. My sickness also caused me to stop growing. Today, I am still as small as a child.

I had been confined to my home for a few months when two of Jehovah’s Witnesses visited. When visitors came, I usually tried

to hide, but that day I let the women talk to me. As they spoke about Paradise, I was reminded of what I had heard when I was about five years old. At that time, a missionary named Jethro, who lived in Suriname, visited our village once a month and studied the Bible with my father. Jethro treated me very kindly. I liked him a lot. Also, my grandparents took me along to some meetings of the Witnesses, which were held in our village. So when Florence, one of the women who visited me that day, asked if I would like to learn more, I said yes.

Florence returned with her husband, Justus, and together they began to study the Bible with me. When they noticed that I did not know how to read, they helped me learn to read. After some time, I was reading on my own. One day, the couple told me that they were assigned to serve in Suriname. Sadly, there was no one in Orealla who could continue the Bible study. But, happily, Jehovah kept me in his thoughts.

Before long, a pioneer named Floyd arrived in Orealla, and he met me as he was preaching from hut to hut. When he talked to me about studying the Bible, I smiled. “Why are you smiling?” he asked. I told him that I had already studied the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* and had begun to study the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*.^{*} I explained why the study had stopped. Floyd studied the remainder of the *Knowledge* book with me, but then he too was assigned to serve elsewhere. I was again without a Bible teacher.

^{*} Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses but now out of print.

However, in 2004, Granville and Joshua, two special pioneers, were assigned to Orealla. They preached from hut to hut, and they found me. When they asked if I wanted to study, I smiled. I asked them to study the *Knowledge* book from the beginning with me. I wanted to see if they would teach me the same things that my former teachers had taught me. Granville told me that meetings were held in the village. Though I had not left my home for nearly ten years, I wanted to attend. So Granville picked me up and put me in a wheelchair and pushed me to the Kingdom Hall.

In time, Granville encouraged me to join the Theocratic Ministry School. He said: “You are disabled, but you can talk. One day, you will give a public talk. It *will* happen.” His encouraging words gave me confidence.

I began to share in the preaching work with Granville. However, many of the dirt roads in the village were too bumpy for a wheelchair. So I asked Granville to put me in a wheelbarrow and push me around. That arrangement worked very well. In April 2005, I got baptized. Soon thereafter, the brothers trained me to care for the congregation literature and to handle the sound system at the Kingdom Hall.

Then, sadly, in 2007 my father died in a boating accident. Our family was in shock. Granville prayed with us and shared comforting passages from the Bible. Two years later, we were overwhelmed by another tragedy—Granville died in a boating accident.

Our small, grieving congregation was left with no elders and one ministerial servant. Granville’s death really hurt; he was a dear friend. He had faithfully helped to care for my spiritual and physical needs. At the meeting following his death, I had the assignment of reading the paragraphs for the *Watchtower* Study. I made it through the first two paragraphs, but then I began to



cry and the tears just kept flowing. I had to get off the platform.

I began to feel better when brothers from another congregation came to help us in Orealla. Also, the branch office sent Kojo, a special pioneer. To my joy, my mother and my younger brother began to study and got baptized. Then, in March 2015, I was appointed as a ministerial servant. After a time, I gave my first public talk. That day, I thought back with a smile and tears of gratitude to what Granville had told me years before: “One day, you will give a public talk. It *will* happen.”

Through JW Broadcasting® programs, I have learned about fellow Witnesses who are in a situation similar to mine. But despite their disability, they lead productive, happy lives. As for me, I can still do some things. My desire to give whatever strength I still have to Jehovah motivated me to become a regular pioneer. And what unexpected news I received in September 2019! That month I learned that I had been appointed to serve as an elder in our congregation of about 40 publishers.

I am thankful for the dear brothers and sisters who studied with me and helped me to carry out my ministry. Above all, I am so grateful that Jehovah has kept me in his thoughts.

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COVER PICTURE:

During a heavy storm at sea, an angel assures Paul that everyone aboard the ship will survive the perilous journey (See study article 46, paragraph 5)

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