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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

STUDY EDITION

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

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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLES 1, 2 PAGES 7-15

The first article discusses the responsibility that each member of the Christian family has in keeping spiritually awake. The second article considers how keeping a simple eye, pursuing spiritual goals, and maintaining a Family Worship evening are essential to the entire family's spiritual well-being.

STUDY ARTICLE 3 PAGES 16-20

Jehovah should be the most important Person in the life of his servants. This article highlights the lessons we learn about this from what happened to the first woman, Eve; the faithful man Job; and the perfect Son of God, Jesus Christ.

STUDY ARTICLE 4 PAGES 21-25

In Romans chapter 11, the apostle Paul speaks of a symbolic olive tree. What do the various features of that tree represent? As we examine their meaning in this article, not only will we learn more about Jehovah's purpose but we will also be amazed by the depth of his wisdom.

STUDY ARTICLE 5 PAGES 28-32

This article discusses Psalms 3 and 4, composed by King David. These inspired songs show that we can act with confidence if we pray for Jehovah's help and we trust in him completely. That is what David did when faced with adversities, such as the treachery of his son Absalom.

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Do You Really Delight in God's Word?

“WHEN I began reading the Bible regularly, I found it to be more of a chore than a delight,” says Lorraine. “It was hard to understand, so I often found myself daydreaming.”

Others admit that they too started reading the Bible without enjoying it. Yet, they persevered because they knew that reading the Holy Scriptures is the right thing to do. Marc says: “It is easy to allow distractions to get in the way of Bible reading and personal study. It took a lot of prayer and effort to make daily Bible reading a part of my routine.”

What can you do to cultivate greater appreciation for God's written Word, the Bible? How can you enjoy reading it? Consider the following suggestions.

Goals and Methods

Approach your Bible reading session in a prayerful and focused frame of mind. Ask Jehovah to help you develop an eagerness to study his Word. Petition him to open your mind and heart to grasp his wisdom more fully. (Ps. 119:34) Without this kind of approach, Bible study can quickly become mechanical, and you may lose the desire to continue. Lynn says: “I sometimes read too fast and completely miss interesting side points. Often, I don't fully grasp the main ideas. I pray for self-control, though, and this helps to keep my mind from wandering.”

Value what you learn. Remember that understanding and applying Bible truths

means your life. Therefore, make a conscientious effort to find practical points and apply them. “I look for things that help me to identify wrong attitudes and motives in myself,” says Chris. “It's refreshing to see how the Bible and many of our publications contain information that benefits me personally, even though the writers have never met me.”

Set attainable goals for yourself. Try to learn something new about Bible characters. You can find fascinating facts about many of them by consulting *Insight on the Scriptures* or the *Watch Tower Publications Index*. As you get to know men and women of the Bible as real people with personalities and feelings, they will come alive in your mind.

Look for new ways to reason on the Scriptures. (Acts 17:2, 3) Sophia studies with that in mind. “My desire is to learn and develop fresh lines of reasoning to use in my ministry and at other times, so that I can express myself clearly about Bible truths. *The Watchtower* is an excellent tool for accomplishing this,” she says.—2 Tim. 2:15.

Visualize Bible accounts. “The word of God is alive,” states Hebrews 4:12. As you read the Scriptures, let God's message live in your mind by imagining what the Bible characters were seeing. Try to hear what they were hearing and feel what they were feeling. Associate their experiences with specific circumstances in your life. Learn

from the way they handled situations. This will enhance your understanding and retention of Bible accounts.

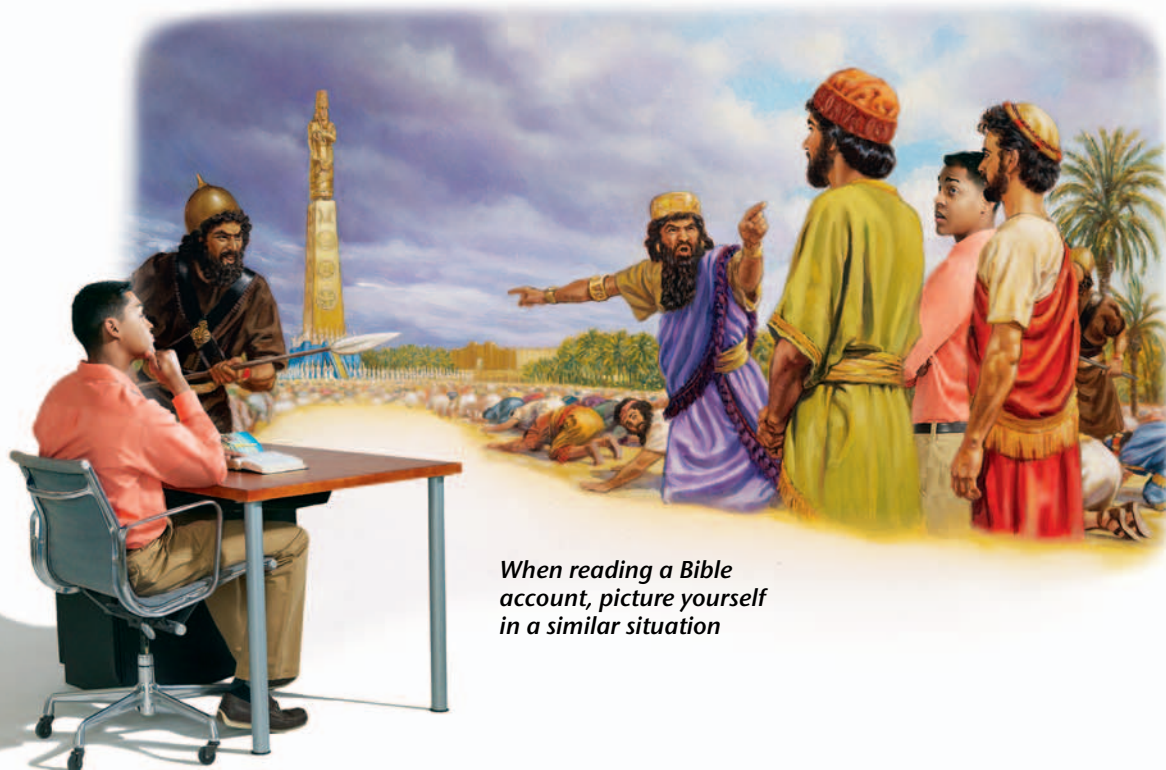
Devote time to difficult scriptures and to explanations of them so that you understand them clearly. Allow yourself plenty of time for each study session. You may well come across very interesting questions that require extra research. Look up unfamiliar words, consider footnotes, and check cross-references in the Bible. The more you understand and apply what you read, the more you will find delight in God's written Word. You will then be able to say, as did the psalmist: "I have taken your [Jehovah's] reminders as a possession to time indefinite, for they are the exultation of my heart." —Ps. 119:111.

Avoid rushing through the material. Be reasonable in the amount of time you schedule for personal study. Balance this with the time you devote to preparing for congregation meetings. "Many times I feel so tense that I can't concentrate," says Raquel. "So I find short study periods beneficial.

These help me to derive the greatest benefit from my study." Chris admits: "When I feel rushed, my conscience bothers me because I retain so little. The material usually doesn't reach my heart." Therefore, take your time.

Develop a greater longing for God's word. The apostle Peter said: "As newborn infants, form a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word, that through it you may grow to salvation." (1 Pet. 2:2) Babies do not have to cultivate a longing for milk. The feeling comes naturally. But the Scriptures acknowledge that we *do* have to form a longing for God's word. If you read just one page of the Bible every day, that longing will soon come. What may at first have seemed difficult will soon become pleasurable.

Meditate on Scriptural passages. Great benefit also comes from meditating on what you read. This will help you to link together spiritual topics that you have investigated. Soon you will acquire a string of spiritual pearls of wisdom—a delightful possession. —Ps. 19:14; Prov. 3:3.



When reading a Bible account, picture yourself in a similar situation



READING GOD'S WORD: GOALS AND METHODS

- Approach your Bible reading session in a prayerful and focused frame of mind.
- Value what you learn.
- Set attainable goals for yourself.
- Look for new ways to reason on the Scriptures.
- Visualize Bible accounts.
- Devote time to difficult scriptures and to explanations of them so that you understand them clearly.
- Avoid rushing through the material.
- Develop a greater longing for God's word.
- Meditate on Scriptural passages.

Time Well Spent

Sticking with good study habits takes effort, but the blessings are immeasurable. Your spiritual comprehension will thus improve. (Heb. 5:12-14) The discernment and wisdom you acquire from the inspired Scriptures bring happiness, pleasantness, and peace. The wisdom found in God's inspired Word is "a tree of life" for those who seize and apply it.—Prov. 3:13-18.

An in-depth study of God's Word can produce in you an understanding heart. (Prov. 15:14) That will help you to offer heartfelt counsel that is solidly based on the Bible. If you allow your decisions to be guided by what you read in the Scriptures and in publications of "the faithful and discreet slave," you will experience the refreshing and stabilizing influence of Jehovah's inspired Word. (Matt. 24:45) You will be more positive, optimistic, and spiritually orient-

ed. Moreover, everything that involves your relationship with God will succeed.—Ps. 1:2, 3.

A heart full of love for God will move you to share your faith. This too can be most rewarding. Sophia is working on remembering and using a variety of scriptures to capture the attention of householders and make her Christian ministry effective and exciting. "Seeing people's reaction to expressions from the Bible is exhilarating," she says.

The most outstanding benefit of taking delight in God's Word, though, is a close relationship with Jehovah. Bible study enables you to know his standards and appreciate his love, generosity, and justice. No other pursuit is more important or more rewarding. Immerse yourself in the study of God's Word. Doing so is truly time well spent.—Ps. 19:7-11.

“A Wonderful Overseer and a Dear Friend”

JOHN (JACK) BARR, who served as a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses, finished his earthly course on Saturday morning, December 4, 2010. He was 97 years of age. He has been described as “a wonderful overseer and a dear friend.”

Brother Jack Barr was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, the youngest of three children. Both of his parents were of the anointed. Brother Barr often spoke with affection about his early family life; he was grateful for the sterling example that his beloved father and mother set for him.

As he entered his teenage years, young Jack began to find it extremely difficult to speak to strangers. However, he worked hard to overcome the problem, and on one Sunday afternoon in 1927, at the age of 14, he announced to his father that he was ready to accompany him in the door-to-door preaching activity. That was the beginning. From that day until his death, Brother Barr remained a zealous preacher of the good news.

A tragic accident that almost cost his dear mother her life caused young Jack to think seriously about the purpose of life, and in 1929 he dedicated himself to Jehovah, symbolizing his dedication at the first opportunity, in 1934. Then in 1939, he became



a member of the Bethel family in London, England. Thus began a career of full-time service that spanned 71 years.

On October 29, 1960, Brother Barr entered what he called “an especially precious relationship” when he married Mildred Willett, a longtime zealous pioneer and missionary. Brother and Sister Barr were known as an exemplary, devoted married couple, and they remained such until Mildred finished her earthly course in October of 2004. Brother and Sister Barr read a portion of the Bible together every day of their married life.

For those who knew him, the name Jack Barr will bring to mind a man who gave thoughtful advice—always balanced, always kind, and rooted in Scripture. He was a hard worker and a considerate and loving overseer as well as a loyal friend. His comments, his talks, and his prayers revealed the depth of his spirituality and the closeness of his relationship with Jehovah.

While we will miss our dear Brother Barr, we rejoice with him in his receiving the gift of immortality—a privilege he looked forward to and often spoke about. It was all he ever wanted.—1 Cor. 15:53, 54.*

* For the life story of John E. Barr, see *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1987, pages 26 to 31.

CHRISTIAN FAMILIES —“STAY AWAKE”

“Let us stay awake and keep our senses.”—1 THESS. 5:6.

REFERRING to “the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah,” the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica: “Brothers, you are not in darkness, so that that day should overtake you as it would thieves, for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We belong neither to night nor to darkness.” Paul added: “So, then, let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses.”—Joel 2:31; 1 Thess. 5:4-6.

² Paul’s counsel to the Thessalonians is especially fitting for Christians living in “the time of the end.” (Dan. 12:4) As the end of his wicked system of things nears, Satan is bent on turning as many true worshippers as he can away from serving God. We are therefore wise to take to heart Paul’s admonition to remain spiritually vigilant. If a Christian family is to succeed in staying awake, it is important that each member shoulder his or her Scriptural responsibility. What role, then, do husbands, wives, and young ones play in helping their families to “stay awake”?

Husbands—Imitate “the Fine Shepherd”

³ “The head of a woman is the man,” states the Bible. (1 Cor. 11:3) What does a man’s responsibility as the head of a household involve? Outlining one aspect of headship, the Scriptures say: “If anyone does not

provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith.” (1 Tim. 5:8) Indeed, a man should provide materially for his family. If he is to help his family to stay awake spiritually, though, he must prove to be more than just a breadwinner. He needs to build up his household spiritually, helping all in the family to strengthen their relationship with God. (Prov. 24:3, 4) How can he do so?

⁴ Since “a husband is head of his wife as the Christ also is head of the congregation,” a married man should examine and imitate the type of headship that Jesus provides for the congregation. (Eph. 5:23) Consider how Jesus described his relationship with his followers. (**Read John 10:14, 15.**) What is the key to success for a man who wants to build up his household spiritually? It is this: Study what Jesus said and did as “the fine shepherd,” and “follow his steps closely.” —1 Pet. 2:21.

⁵ Figuratively speaking, the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep is based on knowledge and trust. The shepherd knows all about his sheep, and the sheep know and trust the shepherd. They recognize and obey his voice. “I know my sheep and my sheep know me,” said Jesus.

1, 2. What is required if a family is to succeed in staying awake spiritually?

3. According to 1 Timothy 5:8, what does a man’s responsibility as the head of a household include?

4. What can help a man to succeed in building up his household spiritually?

5. What knowledge does the Fine Shepherd have of the congregation?

He does not have mere surface knowledge of the congregation. The Greek word here rendered “know” denotes “personal, intimate knowledge.” Yes, the Fine Shepherd knows his sheep personally. He knows their individual needs, their weaknesses, and their strengths. Nothing about his sheep escapes the notice of our Exemplar. And the sheep fully know the shepherd and trust his leadership.

⁶ To exercise his headship in imitation of Christ, a husband must learn to think of himself as a shepherd and of those under his care as sheep. He should strive to have an intimate knowledge of his family. Can a husband really have such knowledge? Yes, if he communicates well with all members of his family, listens to their concerns, takes the lead in family activities, and is conscientious about making good decisions involving such matters as family worship, meeting attendance, field service, recreation, and entertainment. When a Christian husband takes the lead with knowledge not only of God’s Word but also of those entrusted to him, it is more likely that his family members will have confidence in his headship and that he will have the satisfaction of seeing them remain united in true worship.

⁷ A good shepherd also has affection for his sheep. When we study the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry, our heart is moved with appreciation for the affection Jesus showed for his disciples. He even ‘surrendered his soul in behalf of the sheep.’ Husbands should imitate Jesus in showing affection for those under their care. Rather than harshly dominating his wife, a husband who desires God’s approval continues loving her “just as the Christ also loved the

congregation.” (Eph. 5:25) His words should be kind and considerate, for she is worthy of honor.—1 Pet. 3:7.

⁸ In training young ones, the family head should firmly uphold godly principles. However, he must not fail to show affection for his children. Needed discipline should be administered lovingly. Some young ones may take longer than others to get the sense of what is expected of them. In that case, a father should show them greater patience. When men consistently follow the example of Jesus, they create a home environment that is safe and secure. Their families enjoy the type of spiritual security that the psalmist sang about.—***Read Psalm 23:1-6.***

⁹ The patriarch Noah lived in the time of the end of the world of his day. But Jehovah kept him “safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people.” (2 Pet. 2:5) Noah had the responsibility of helping his family to survive the Flood. Christian family heads are in a similar position in these last days. (Matt. 24:37) How vital it is that they study the example of “the fine shepherd” and strive to imitate him!

Wives—‘Build Up Your Household’

¹⁰ “Let wives be in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord,” wrote the apostle Paul. (Eph. 5:22) This statement in no way suggests an undignified position. Prior to creating the first woman, Eve, the true God declared: “It is not good for the man to continue by himself. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him.” (Gen. 2:18) The role of “helper” and “comple-

9. Like the patriarch Noah, Christian husbands have what responsibility, and what will help them to shoulder it?

10. Subjection to her husband means what for a wife?

6. How can husbands imitate the Fine Shepherd?
7, 8. How can a husband imitate the Fine Shepherd in showing affection for those under his care?

ment”—that of being supportive of her husband as he cares for his family responsibilities—is an honorable one indeed.

¹¹ An exemplary wife works for the good of her household. (**Read Proverbs 14:1.**) In contrast with a foolish woman, who shows disrespect for the headship arrangement, a wise woman has deep respect for this provision. Rather than manifesting the attitude of disobedience and independence that characterizes the world, she is in submission to her mate.

(Eph. 2:2) A wife who is foolish does not hesitate to speak unfavorably of her husband, whereas a wise woman works to increase the respect that her children and others have for him. Such a wife is careful not to undermine her husband’s headship by nagging him or arguing with him. There is also the matter of being economical. A foolish woman likely squanders her family’s hard-earned resources. A supportive wife is not like that. She cooperates with her husband in financial matters. Her way of doing things is marked by prudence and economy. She does not pressure her husband to work overtime.

¹² An exemplary wife helps the family to “stay awake” by assisting her husband in the spiritual education of the children. (Prov. 1:8) She actively supports the Family Worship program. Moreover, she is supportive of her husband when he gives counsel and discipline to their children. How different she is from an uncooperative



A supportive wife is priceless to a spiritual man

wife, whose children suffer physically and spiritually!

¹³ How does a supportive wife feel about seeing her husband play an active role in the Christian congregation? Why, she is joyful! Whether her husband is a ministerial servant, an elder, or perhaps a member of a Hospital Liaison Committee or a Regional Building Committee, she is happy about his privilege. Actively supporting her husband with words and actions will surely involve sacrifices on her part. But she is aware that her husband’s involvement in theocratic activities helps the entire family to keep awake spiritually.

¹⁴ Being exemplary in a supportive role may be a challenge for a wife when her husband makes a decision she disagrees with. Even then, she manifests a “quiet and mild

13. Why is it important for a wife to support her husband in his active involvement in theocratic activities?

14. (a) What may be a challenge for a supportive wife, and how can she meet the challenge? (b) How does a wife contribute to the well-being of the entire family?

11. How does an exemplary wife ‘build up her household’?

12. What can a wife do to help her family to “stay awake”?

spirit” and cooperates with him to make his decision work. (1 Pet. 3:4) A good wife tries to follow the fine examples of godly women of former times, such as Sarah, Ruth, Abigail, and Jesus’ mother, Mary. (1 Pet. 3:5, 6) She also imitates present-day older women who are “reverent in behavior.” (Titus 2:3, 4) By showing love and respect for her husband, an exemplary wife contributes much to the marital partnership and to the well-being of the entire family. Her home is a place of comfort and safety. To a spiritual man, a supportive wife is priceless! —Prov. 18:22.

Youths—‘Keep Your Eyes on the Things Unseen’

¹⁵ How can you young ones work along with your parents so that your family will “stay awake” spiritually? Consider the prize that Jehovah has set before you. Perhaps from your childhood, your parents showed you illustrations depicting life in Paradise. As you grew older, they likely used the Bible and Christian publications to help you visualize what everlasting life would be like in the new world. Keeping your eyes focused on service to Jehovah and planning your life accordingly will help you to “stay awake.”

¹⁶ Take to heart the apostle Paul’s words found at 1 Corinthians 9:24. (**Read.**) Run the race for life with the full intention of winning. Choose a course that will result in attaining the prize of everlasting life. Many have allowed the pursuit of material things to distract them from keeping their eyes on the prize. How foolish that is! Planning a life around gaining riches does not lead to true happiness. The things money can

15. How can young ones work along with their parents so that the family will “stay awake”?

16, 17. What can youths do to run the race for life successfully?

buy are temporary. You, though, keep your eyes on “the things unseen.” Why? Because “the things unseen are everlasting.”—2 Cor. 4:18.

¹⁷ “The things unseen” include Kingdom blessings. Plan to live your life in such a way as to attain them. Real happiness comes from using your life in Jehovah’s service. Serving the true God provides opportunities to reach out for short-range as well as long-range goals.* Setting realistic spiritual goals can help you to stay focused on serving God with a view to attaining the prize of everlasting life.—1 John 2:17.

¹⁸ Young ones, the first step on the road to life is to make the truth your own. Have you taken that step? Ask yourself: ‘Am I a spiritual person, or is my participation in spiritual activities dependent on my parents? Do I cultivate qualities that make me pleasing to God? Do I make an effort to maintain a consistent routine of sharing in activities related to true worship, such as regular prayer, study, meeting attendance, and field service? Am I drawing close to God by nurturing a personal relationship with him?’—Jas. 4:8.

* See *The Watchtower*, November 15, 2010, pages 12-16; July 15, 2004, pages 21-23.

18, 19. How can a young person determine if he has made the truth his own?

What Did You Learn?

- Why is it essential for Christian families to “stay awake”?
- How can a husband imitate the Fine Shepherd?
- What can an exemplary wife do to be supportive of her husband?
- How can young ones help keep their families spiritually awake?

¹⁹ Reflect on Moses' example. Despite having been subjected to a foreign culture, he chose to be identified as a worshipper of Jehovah rather than a son of the daughter of Pharaoh. (**Read Hebrews 11:24-27.**) Christian youths, you too need to be determined to serve Jehovah faithfully. By doing that, you will gain true happiness, the best quality of life now, and the hope of getting "a firm hold on the real life."—1 Tim. 6:19.

²⁰ In the ancient games, only one runner won the race. That is not so in the race for life. It is God's will "that all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Tim. 2:3, 4) Many

20. In the race for life, who receive the prize?

have run successfully before you, and many are running alongside you. (Heb. 12:1, 2) The prize will go to all those who do not give up. So be determined to win!

²¹ "The coming of the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah" is inevitable. (Mal. 4:5) That day should not catch Christian families unawares. It is vital for all in the family to shoulder their Scriptural responsibility. What else can you do to remain spiritually alert and strengthen your relationship with God? The following article will discuss three factors that affect the spiritual well-being of the entire family.

21. What will be considered in the following article?

CHRISTIAN FAMILIES —“KEEP READY”

“Keep ready, because at an hour that you do not think likely the Son of man is coming.”—LUKE 12:40.

“WHEN the Son of man arrives in his glory” and separates “people one from another,” how will you and your family fare? (Matt. 25:31, 32) Since this is to take place at an hour that we do not think likely, how vital that we take to heart Jesus’ admonition to “keep ready”!—Luke 12:40.

² The preceding article discussed how each member of the family can help the entire family to keep spiritually awake by taking his or her responsibility seriously. Let us

1, 2. Why should we take to heart Jesus’ admonition to “keep ready”?

consider other ways that we can contribute to the spiritual well-being of our family.

Keep Your Eye “Simple”

³ To be in a state of readiness for Christ’s coming, families must be careful not to get sidetracked from matters pertaining to true worship. They need to be on guard against being turned aside by distractions. Since materialism is a snare that has entrapped not a few families, consider what Jesus said about

3, 4. (a) Christian families should be on guard against what? (b) What does it mean to keep our eye “simple”?

keeping our eye “simple.” (*Read Matthew 6:22, 23.*) Just as a lamp can illuminate our path and allow us to walk without falling, what we take in through our figurative ‘eyes of the heart’ can enlighten us, helping us to conduct ourselves without stumbling.—Eph. 1:18.

⁴ For a literal eye to see clearly, it must function properly and be able to focus on what it is looking at. It is no different with the eyes of the heart. Having a simple figurative eye means that we are single-minded in purpose. Rather than leading a life that is centered on material things and being consumed with taking care of only the physical needs of the family, we keep our eye focused on spiritual matters. (Matt. 6:33) This means that we remain content with our material provisions and give God’s service the first place in our life.—Heb. 13:5.

⁵ What good results there can be when children are trained to keep a simple eye! Consider the example of a teenage girl in the country of Ethiopia. She did so well in her schoolwork that upon completing her basic education, she was offered a scholarship for further education. Having her eye focused on serving Jehovah, however, she turned down the scholarship. Soon thereafter, she received a job offer that would pay her 3,000 euros a month—a high amount in comparison with the average wages in her country. But the girl’s “eye” was set on pioneer service. She did not need to consult her parents to turn down the job. How did her parents feel on learning what their daughter had done? Why, they rejoiced with her and told her how proud they were of her!

⁶ Implicit in the words of Jesus recorded at

5. How did a certain teenage girl demonstrate that her “eye” was set on serving God?

6, 7. To what danger should we ‘keep our eyes open’?

Matthew 6:22, 23 is a warning about greed. Jesus did not contrast “simple” with its antonym “complex” but with the term “wicked.” A ‘wicked eye’ is “bad; envious,” that is, covetous or greedy. (Matt. 6:23; ftn.) How does Jehovah feel about covetousness or greed? “Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort or greediness [or, “covetousness”] not even be mentioned among you,” states the Bible.—Eph. 5:3; ftn.

⁷ While greed may be easy to detect in others, it is not so easy to detect in ourselves. Hence, we are wise to heed Jesus’ advice: “Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness.” (Luke 12:15) Doing so calls for examining ourselves to see what we have set our hearts on. Christian families should think seriously about the time and money they spend on entertainment, recreation, and the acquisition of material things.

⁸ Making a purchase is more involved than simply deciding whether an item is affordable or not. Take into consideration factors such as these: ‘Will I have the time to use the item regularly and care for its upkeep? How long will it take to learn to operate it properly?’ You young ones, do not believe all the world’s advertising about consumer goods and thus make unreasonable demands for expensive brands of clothing or for other items. Exercise restraint. Also, think of how acquiring something will affect your family’s preparedness for the coming of the Son of man. Have faith in Jehovah’s promise: “I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.”—Heb. 13:5.

Pursue Spiritual Goals

⁹ Another way for family members to

8. When it comes to making purchases, how can we ‘keep our eyes open’?

9. What can the pursuit of spiritual goals do for a family?



strengthen their faith and contribute to the spiritual well-being of the entire family is for them to set spiritual goals and pursue them. Doing so can help families gauge how well they are progressing in their objective of pleasing Jehovah and can enable them to evaluate the relative importance of any activity.—**Read Philippians 1:10.**

¹⁰ Even setting small realistic goals that are within reach of nearly every family member can yield rich dividends. Take, for example, the goal of discussing the day's text every day. The comments given by family members can help the head of the household to discern the degree of their spirituality. The goal of regularly reading

10, 11. As a family, what spiritual goals are you pursuing, and what goals would you like to set for the future?

the Bible together as a family provides an excellent opportunity for children to improve their reading skills as well as their comprehension of the Bible's message. (Ps. 1:1, 2) And should we not want to make it our goal to improve the quality of our prayers? Cultivating aspects of the fruitage of the spirit to a greater degree can also be an excellent goal to pursue. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Or what about looking for ways to show fellow feeling for people we meet in the ministry? Striving to do that as a family can help children learn to be compassionate, and they will be more likely to develop a desire to serve as regular pioneers or missionaries.

¹¹ Why not consider some goals that you and your family can pursue? Can your family set a goal of spending more time in the ministry? Could you work toward

overcoming apprehension about witnessing over the telephone, on the street, or at places of business? What about working where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers? Could a family member learn a new language in order to share the good news with those of other nationalities?

¹² As a family head, identify areas in which your family could grow spiritually. Then set specific goals to achieve that aim. The goals you set as a family should be realistic and within reach according to your circumstances and abilities. (Prov. 13:12) Of course, working to attain a worthwhile goal takes time. So buy out time spent watching television and use it for spiritual pursuits. (Eph. 5:15, 16) Work hard to reach the goals you set for your family. (Gal. 6:9) A family that pursues spiritual goals will make its advancement “manifest to all persons.” —1 Tim. 4:15.

Maintain a Family Worship Evening

¹³ An excellent aid in helping families to “keep ready” for the coming of the Son of man is the significant change in the weekly meeting schedule that went into effect on January 1, 2009. The need to meet together on a separate day for what was then called the Congregation Book Study was eliminated by combining that meeting with the Theocratic Ministry School and Service Meeting. This adjustment was made to provide Christian families an opportunity to fortify their spirituality by scheduling a specific evening each week for family worship. Now that some time has elapsed since that change was introduced, we can ask our-

12. What can family heads do to help their families grow spiritually?

13. What change was introduced in the weekly schedule of congregation meetings, and what questions should we reflect on?

selves: ‘Am I using the time made available to have a Family Worship evening or to engage in personal study? Have I been successful in meeting the objective of that arrangement?’

¹⁴ The primary purpose of maintaining a Family Worship evening or a time for personal study is to draw closer to God. (Jas. 4:8) When we spend time studying the Bible on a regular basis and grow in knowledge of the Creator, our relationship with him is strengthened. The closer we draw to Jehovah, the greater our motivation is to love him ‘with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, and our whole strength.’ (Mark 12:30) Surely, we are eager to obey God and become imitators of him. (Eph. 5:1) Maintaining a regular Family Worship evening, then, is a key ingredient to help all the members of our family “keep ready” spiritually as we await the foretold “great tribulation.” (Matt. 24:21) It is vital to survival.

¹⁵ The Family Worship arrangement also has another objective—that of helping family members draw closer to one another. Spending time together discussing spiritual matters every week has a marked effect on how family members feel toward one another. What closeness marriage mates experience when they hear each other express joy over a spiritual gem they discover together! (**Read Ecclesiastes 4:12.**) Parents and children who worship together are likely to become united in love, the “perfect bond of union.” —Col. 3:14.

14. (a) What is the primary purpose of maintaining an evening for Family Worship or personal study? (b) Why is setting aside an evening for study essential?

15. What effect can the Family Worship evening have on how family members feel toward one another?

¹⁶ Consider how three spiritual sisters have benefited from the arrangement of setting aside an evening for Bible study. Though not related to one another, these three elderly widows live in the same city and have been good friends for several years. Desiring to have more association together and at the same time wanting it to be of spiritual value rather than only of a social nature, they decided to set aside an evening to meet and study the Bible. They started doing this using the book *“Bearing Thorough Witness” About God’s Kingdom*. “We enjoy our time so much that our study usually lasts longer than an hour,” says one of them. “We try to visualize the situations that our first-century brothers were in and discuss what we would do under similar circumstances. Then we try to apply in the ministry the points learned from our discussion. This has made our Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work more enjoyable and productive than ever before.” In addition to edifying them spiritually, the arrangement has brought these three good friends even closer to one another. “We cherish this arrangement,” they say.

¹⁷ What about you? How are you benefiting from an evening set aside for family worship or personal study? If done on a hit-or-miss basis, the arrangement is not going to achieve its desired objectives. Each member of the family should be ready to study at the designated time. Minor matters should not be allowed to interfere with the evening. Moreover, the study material should be selected in such a way that the sessions are practical for your family. What can you do to make these study periods enjoyable?

16. Relate how three spiritual sisters are benefiting from an evening set aside for Bible study.

17. What factors contribute to the success of the Family Worship evening?

Employ effective teaching methods, and keep the atmosphere respectful and tranquil.—Jas. 3:18.*

“Stay Awake” and “Keep Ready”

¹⁸ The deteriorating world conditions that mark our day leave no doubt that since 1914, Satan’s wicked world has entered its last days. The storm clouds of Armageddon cannot be far-off. Soon it will be time for the Son of man to come to execute Jehovah’s judgment on the ungodly. (Ps. 37:10; Prov. 2:21, 22) Should not that awareness affect you and your family?

¹⁹ Are you heeding Jesus’ advice to keep your eye “simple”? While the people of this world may reach out for riches, fame, or power, is your family pursuing spiritual goals? Is the arrangement for a Family Worship evening or a time for personal study working for you? Are you achieving the intended objectives? As discussed in the preceding article, are you shouldering your Scriptural responsibility as a husband, a wife, or a child, thus helping the entire family to “stay awake”? (1 Thess. 5:6) If so, you will “keep ready” for the coming of the Son of man.

* For ideas on what to study and how to make Family Worship evenings practical and enjoyable, see the October 15, 2009, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 29-31.

18, 19. How should knowing that the coming of the Son of man is near affect you and your family?

What Did You Learn?

- Explain how Christian families can “keep ready” by . . .
 - having a “simple” eye.
 - setting and pursuing spiritual goals.
 - maintaining a Family Worship evening.

WHO IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN YOUR LIFE?

“You alone are the Most High over all the earth.”—PS. 83:18.

PERHAPS the first time you saw Jehovah’s name was when it was shown to you at Psalm 83:18. You may have been surprised to read those words: “That people may know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth.” Since then, you no doubt have used this same scripture to help others come to know our loving God, Jehovah.—Rom. 10:12, 13.

² Although it is important for people to know Jehovah’s name, such knowledge in itself is not enough. Notice how the psalmist highlights yet another truth essential to our salvation when he says: “You alone are the Most High over all the earth.” Yes, Jehovah is the most important Person in the whole universe. As the Creator of all things, he has the right to expect full submission from all his creatures. (Rev. 4:11) For good reason, then, we need to ask ourselves, ‘Who is the most important person in *my* life?’ It is vital that we carefully analyze our answer to that question!

The Issue in the Garden of Eden

³ The seriousness of this question can be clearly seen in the events that developed back in the garden of Eden. There the rebellious angel who later became known as Satan the Devil enticed the first woman, Eve, to put her own desires ahead of Jehovah’s command not to eat the fruit of a certain

tree. (Gen. 2:17; 2 Cor. 11:3) She succumbed to this enticement and thereby showed a lack of respect for Jehovah’s sovereignty. Eve did not acknowledge Jehovah as the most important Person in her life. But how was Satan able to deceive Eve?

⁴ Satan used several subtle tactics in his conversation with Eve. (**Read Genesis 3: 1-5.**) First, Satan did not use Jehovah’s personal name. He simply spoke of “God.” By contrast, the writer of Genesis used Jehovah’s personal name in the first verse of that chapter. Second, instead of speaking of God’s “command,” Satan merely asked about what God had “said.” (Gen. 2:16) In this subtle way, Satan may have tried to minimize the importance of that command. Third, although speaking only to Eve, he used the plural form of the pronoun “you.” In so doing, he may have tried to appeal to her pride, endeavoring to make her feel important—as if she were the spokesperson for herself and her husband. The result? Eve evidently took it upon herself to speak for both of them by saying to the serpent: “Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat.”

⁵ Satan also distorted the facts. He implied that God was unfair in demanding that Adam and Eve “must not eat from *every* tree of the garden.” Next, Satan got Eve to think about herself and how she could sup-

1, 2. With regard to our personal salvation, why is it not enough just to know Jehovah’s name?

3, 4. How was Satan able to deceive Eve, and with what result?

5. (a) On what did Satan get Eve to focus her attention? (b) What did Eve show by eating of the forbidden fruit?

posedly improve her lot in life, becoming “like God.” Eventually, he got her to focus on the tree and its fruit rather than on her relationship with the One who had given her everything. (**Read Genesis 3:6.**) Sadly, by eating of the fruit, Eve showed that Jehovah was not the most important Person in her life.

The Issue in Job’s Day

⁶ Centuries later, the faithful man Job had an opportunity to show who was the most important Person in his life. When Jehovah confronted Satan with Job’s record of integrity, Satan retorted: “Is it for nothing that Job has feared God?” (**Read Job 1:7-10.**) Satan did not deny that Job was obedient to God. Instead, he questioned Job’s motives. He slyly accused Job of serving Jehovah, not out of love, but out of selfish interest. Only Job could answer that charge, and he was given the opportunity to do so.

⁷ Jehovah allowed Satan to bring a series of disasters upon Job, one after the other. (Job 1:12-19) How did Job react to this reversal of circumstances? We are told that he “did not sin or ascribe anything improper to God.” (Job 1:22) But Satan was still not silenced. He further complained: “Skin in behalf of skin, and everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul.”* (Job 2:4)

* Some Bible scholars feel that the expression “skin in behalf of skin” may imply that Job would selfishly be willing to allow his children and animals to lose their skins, or lives, as long as he could keep his own skin, or life. Others feel that the expression emphasizes that a person would be willing to lose some skin if it meant saving his life. For example, a person may hold up his arm to avert a blow to his head, thus losing some skin to save his skin. Whatever the idiom meant, it obviously implied that Job would gladly give up everything as long as he could keep his life.

6. How did Satan challenge Job’s record of integrity, and what opportunity was thereby given to Job?
7, 8. What trials did Job have to deal with, and what did he show by his faithful endurance?



Eve failed to focus on her relationship with Jehovah

Satan alleged that if Job personally suffered, he would decide that Jehovah was not the most important Person in his life.

⁸ Job was disfigured by a disgusting disease and then pressured by his wife to curse God and die. Later, three false comforters accused him of misconduct. (Job 2:11-13; 8: 2-6; 22:2, 3) However, through all this suffering, Job refused to give up his integrity. (**Read Job 2:9, 10.**) He showed by his faithful endurance that Jehovah was the most important Person in his life. Job also demonstrated that it is possible for an imperfect human to answer, although in a limited way, the false accusations of the Devil.—Compare Proverbs 27:11.

Jesus’ Perfect Answer

⁹ Shortly after Jesus’ baptism, Satan tried to entice Jesus to pursue selfish desires rather than to keep Jehovah as the most

9. (a) How did Satan try to tempt Jesus with regard to personal desire? (b) What was Jesus’ reaction to this temptation?

important Person in his life. The Devil presented Jesus with three temptations. First, he tried to appeal to fleshly desire, tempting Jesus to turn stones into bread. (Matt. 4:2, 3) Jesus had just fasted for 40 days and was very hungry. So the Devil urged him to misuse his miraculous powers to satisfy his hunger. How did Jesus react? Unlike Eve, Jesus focused on Jehovah's Word and immediately rejected the temptation.—**Read Matthew 4:4.**

¹⁰ Satan also tried to goad Jesus into reacting selfishly. He dared Jesus to hurl himself off the battlement of the temple. (Matt. 4: 5, 6) What was Satan hoping to accomplish? Satan alleged that if Jesus was not injured by the fall, it would prove that he was “a son of God.” Obviously, the Devil wanted Jesus to be overly concerned about his own reputation, even to the point of making a showy display. Satan knew that a person might accept a dangerous dare because of pride and a desire not to lose face in front of others. Satan misapplied a scripture, but Jesus showed

10. Why did Satan dare Jesus to hurl himself off the battlement of the temple?

that He had a complete understanding of Jehovah's Word. (**Read Matthew 4:7.**) By rejecting that dare, Jesus again proved that Jehovah was the most important Person in his life.

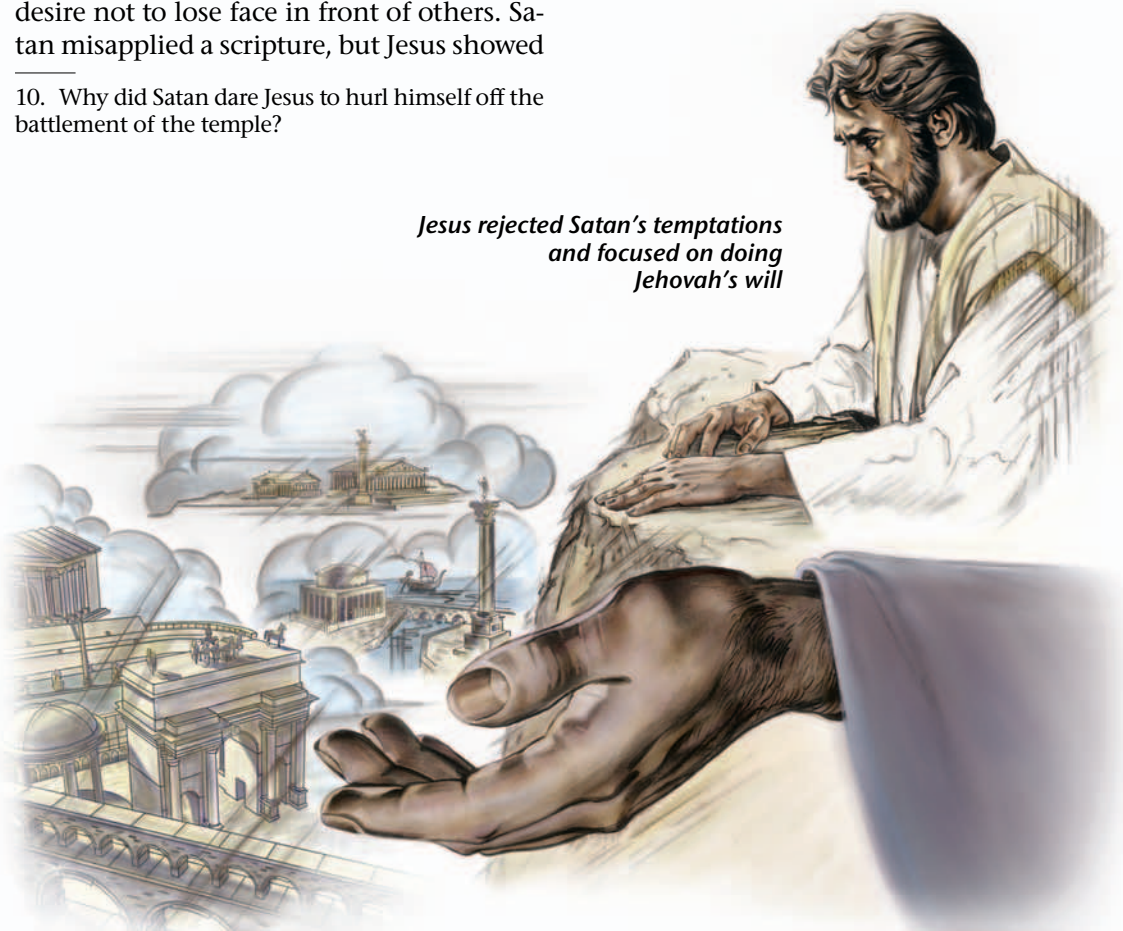
¹¹ In his last desperate attempt, Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. (Matt. 4:8, 9) Jesus immediately refused the offer. He realized that accepting it would be tantamount to rejecting Jehovah's sovereignty—God's very right to be the Most High. (**Read Matthew 4:10.**) In each case, Jesus answered Satan by quoting scriptures that contained Jehovah's personal name.

¹² As Jesus neared the end of his earthly course, he was confronted with a very dif-

11. Why did Jesus refuse the Devil's offer of all the kingdoms of the world?

12. What difficult decision did Jesus face as he neared the end of his earthly course, and what do we learn from the way he reacted to that decision?

*Jesus rejected Satan's temptations
and focused on doing
Jehovah's will*



ficult decision. Throughout his ministry, he had expressed his willingness to offer his life as a sacrifice. (Matt. 20:17-19, 28; Luke 12:50; John 16:28) However, Jesus realized that he was also going to be falsely charged and convicted under the Jewish legal system and be executed as a blasphemer. This aspect of his death troubled him deeply. He prayed: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me." But he continued: "Yet, not as I will, but as you will." (Matt. 26:39) Yes, Jesus' faithfulness right up until his death proved beyond a doubt who was the most important Person in his life!

Our Answer to the Question

¹³ What have we learned so far? In the case of Eve, we learn that those who cave in to selfish desires or feelings of self-importance reveal that Jehovah is not the most important Person in their life. By contrast, from Job's integrity-keeping course, we learn that even imperfect humans can show that they put Jehovah first by faithfully enduring adversities—even when the cause of such troubles is not fully understood by them. (Jas. 5:11) Finally, Jesus' example teaches us to be willing to suffer shame and not to put too much importance on our personal reputation. (Heb. 12:2) But how can we apply these lessons?

¹⁴ *Never allow temptations to make you forget Jehovah.* Eve allowed her attention to be directed to the temptation immediately in front of her. She saw that the fruit "was good for food and that it was something to be longed for to the eyes, yes, the tree was desirable to look upon." (Gen. 3:6) What a contrast to Jesus' reaction to the three

temptations! Each time, he saw beyond the immediate temptation and considered the consequences of his actions. He relied on God's Word and also used Jehovah's name.

¹⁵ When we are faced with temptations to do things that are displeasing to Jehovah, on what do we focus our attention? The more we focus on the temptation, the stronger that wrong desire will be. (Jas. 1:14, 15) We need to take quick action to root out the desire, even if that action may seem as drastic as, in effect, removing a part of our body. (Matt. 5:29, 30) Like Jesus, we need to focus on the consequences of our actions—how they will affect our relationship with Jehovah. We must recall what his Word, the Bible, says. Only in this way can we prove that Jehovah is the most important Person in our life.

¹⁶ *Never allow personal tragedies to embitter you against Jehovah.* (Prov. 19:3) As we draw ever closer to the end of this wicked world, more and more of Jehovah's people are being affected by disasters and tragedies. We do not expect miraculous protection at this time. Even so, like Job, we may find that our hearts are weighed down when we lose loved ones or suffer personal difficulties.

¹⁷ Job did not understand why Jehovah allowed certain things to happen, and at times we may not understand why bad things happen. Perhaps we have heard of faithful brothers who were killed by an earthquake, such as those in Haiti, or by some other natural disaster. Or we may know of an integrity keeper who has become a victim of an act of violence or has died in a terrible accident. Or we might even find ourselves plagued by some distressing circumstances or perceived injustices. Our anguished hearts may cry

13. What lessons have we learned so far from the examples of Eve, Job, and Jesus Christ?

14, 15. How did Jesus' reaction to temptation differ from that of Eve, and how can we imitate Jesus? (Comment on illustration on page 18.)

16-18. (a) What may cause our hearts to become weighed down? (b) What will help us to cope with distressing circumstances?

Witnessing from tent to tent after the earthquake in Haiti



During times of distress, we can focus on “the God of all comfort”

out: ‘Why, Jehovah. Why me? What did I do wrong?’ (Hab. 1:2, 3) What will help us cope at times like that?

¹⁸ We need to be careful not to assume that such events are an indication of Jehovah’s disapproval. Jesus highlighted this fact when referring to two tragedies that occurred in his day. (**Read Luke 13:1-5.**) Many calamities are the result of “time and unforeseen occurrence.” (Eccl. 9:11) But no matter what the cause of our distress, we can cope if we focus our attention on “the God of all comfort.” He will give us the strength required to continue on faithfully.—2 Cor. 1:3-6.

¹⁹ *Never allow pride or fear of shame to become your prime focus.* Jesus’ humility enabled him to ‘empty himself and take a slave’s form.’ (Phil. 2:5-8) He was able to en-

19, 20. What helped Jesus to endure humiliating situations, and what can help us to do the same?

What Can We Learn From . . .

- the way Satan deceived Eve?
- Job’s reaction to personal tragedies?
- the main focus of Jesus’ attention?

dure many humiliating situations because of his reliance on Jehovah. (1 Pet. 2:23, 24) By so doing, Jesus put Jehovah’s will first, and this resulted in his being exalted to a superior position. (Phil. 2:9) Jesus recommended the same life course to his disciples.—Matt. 23:11, 12; Luke 9:26.

²⁰ At times, certain tests of our faith may be embarrassing. Still, we should have confidence like that of the apostle Paul, who said: “For this very cause I am also suffering these things, but I am not ashamed. For I know the one whom I have believed, and I am confident he is able to guard what I have laid up in trust with him until that day.” —2 Tim. 1:12.

²¹ The Bible foretold that during our time people would be “lovers of themselves.” (2 Tim. 3:2) No wonder, then, that we are surrounded by a me-first generation. May we never be tainted by such a selfish attitude! Rather, whether we are faced with temptation, beset by tragedies, or confronted with efforts to shame us, let each one of us be determined to prove that Jehovah is indeed the most important Person in our life!

21. In spite of the world’s selfish attitude, what is your determination?

‘O THE DEPTH OF GOD’S WISDOM!’

*“O the depth of God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge!
How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are!”*

—ROM. 11:33.

WHAT is the greatest privilege you have ever been granted? Initially, you might think of some assignment you have received or an honor that has been bestowed upon you. However, for baptized Christians, the greatest privilege is our being allowed to have a close relationship with the only true God, Jehovah. This has resulted in our becoming “known by him.” —1 Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9.

² Why is knowing Jehovah and becoming known by him such a great privilege? Because not only is he the greatest Personage in all the universe but he also serves as the Protector of those whom he loves. The prophet Nahum was inspired to write: “Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of distress. And he is cognizant of those seeking refuge in him.” (Nah. 1:7; Ps. 1:6) In fact, our very prospects for eternal life are dependent on our coming to know the true God and his Son, Jesus Christ. —John 17:3.

³ Coming to know God means more than simply knowing his literal name. We must get to know him as a Friend, understanding his likes and dislikes. Our living in harmony with that knowledge also plays a vital part in

our showing that we have come to know God intimately. (1 John 2:4) But something else is required if we truly wish to know Jehovah. We need to know not only what he has done but also how and why he has acted that way. The more we understand Jehovah’s purposes, the more we are compelled to marvel at ‘the depth of God’s wisdom.’ —Rom. 11:33.

A God of Purpose

⁴ Jehovah is a God of purpose, and the Bible speaks of his “eternal purpose.” (Eph. 3:10, 11) What does this expression really mean? As used in the Bible, the word “purpose” refers to a specific goal, or aim, that can be achieved in more than one way.

⁵ To illustrate: A person may desire to travel to a specific destination. Getting to that destination then becomes his goal, or purpose. He may have different options with regard to the means of transportation and the routes he can take. As he travels along his chosen route, he may be confronted with unexpected weather conditions, traffic congestion, and road closures, requiring him to take an alternate route. Yet, no matter what adjustments he needs to make, he will still have accomplished his goal when he arrives at his destination.

1. What is the greatest privilege for baptized Christians?

2. Why is knowing Jehovah and being known by him such a great privilege?

3. What is involved in coming to know God?

4, 5. (a) As used in the Bible, what does the word “purpose” refer to? (b) Illustrate how a purpose can be achieved in more than one way.

⁶ Jehovah has likewise shown considerable flexibility in working out his eternal purpose. Taking into consideration the free will of his intelligent creation, he readily adjusts the way he achieves his purpose. For example, let us consider how Jehovah accomplishes his purpose regarding the promised Seed. Originally, Jehovah told the first human pair: “Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it.” (Gen. 1:28) Was that stated purpose foiled by the rebellion in the garden of Eden? Absolutely not! Jehovah immediately reacted to that new situation by using an alternate “route” to achieve his purpose. He foretold the appearance of a “seed” who would undo the damage done by the rebels.—Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:14-17; 1 John 3:8.

⁷ Jehovah’s ability to adapt to new circumstances while in the process of bringing his purpose to completion is in harmony with a description he gave of himself. When Moses presented Jehovah with potential impediments to the assignment he had been given, Jehovah assured him by saying: “‘I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be.’ And he added: ‘This is what you are to say to the sons of Israel, “I shall prove to be has sent me to you.”’” (Ex. 3:14) Yes, Jehovah is able to become whatever he needs to become in order to accomplish his purpose fully! This is beautifully illustrated by the apostle Paul in chapter 11 of the book of Romans. There he speaks of a symbolic olive tree. An examination of this illustration will enhance our appreciation for the depth of Jehovah’s wisdom, whether our hope is to go to heaven or to gain everlasting life here on earth.

6. How has Jehovah shown flexibility in fulfilling his purpose?

7. What do we learn from Jehovah’s description of himself as recorded at Exodus 3:14?

Jehovah’s Purpose Concerning the Foretold Seed

⁸ Before we can understand the illustration of the olive tree, we need to know four facts concerning the development of Jehovah’s purpose with regard to the foretold seed. First, Jehovah promised Abraham that “all nations of the earth [would] certainly bless themselves” by means of his seed, or descendants. (Gen. 22:17, 18) Second, the nation of Israel that sprang from Abraham was offered the prospect of producing “a kingdom of priests.” (Ex. 19:5, 6) Third, when the majority of natural Israelites did not accept the Messiah, Jehovah took other steps to produce “a kingdom of priests.” (Matt. 21:43; Rom. 9:27-29) Finally, although Jesus is the primary part of Abraham’s seed, others are given the privilege to become part of that seed.—Gal. 3:16, 29.

⁹ Building on these four basic facts, we learn in the book of Revelation that a total of 144,000 individuals will rule with Jesus as kings and priests in heaven. (Rev. 14:1-4) These are also spoken of as “the sons of Israel.” (Rev. 7:4-8) But are all of the 144,000 natural Israelites, or Jews? The answer to that question reveals Jehovah’s flexibility in fulfilling his purpose. Let us now see how the apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans helps us to find the answer.

“A Kingdom of Priests”

¹⁰ As mentioned earlier, the nation of Israel exclusively had the prospect of supplying members to make up “a kingdom of priests

8, 9. (a) What four basic facts will help us understand the illustration of the olive tree? (b) The answer to what question reveals Jehovah’s flexibility in fulfilling his purpose?

10. What exclusive prospect did the nation of Israel have?

and a holy nation.” (*Read Romans 9:4, 5.*) But what would happen when the promised Seed arrived? Would the nation of natural Israel produce the full number of 144,000 spiritual Israelites who would become the secondary part of Abraham’s seed?

¹¹ *Read Romans 11:7-10.* As a nation, the first-century Jews rejected Jesus. So the opportunity to produce Abraham’s seed ceased to be exclusively theirs. However, when the selection of those who would form the heavenly “kingdom of priests” started at Pentecost 33 C.E., there were some

11, 12. (a) When did the selection begin of those who would form the heavenly Kingdom, and what was the reaction of the majority of Jews living at that time? (b) How did Jehovah complete “the full number” of those who were to become Abraham’s seed?

righthearted Jews who accepted the invitation. Numbering a few thousand, these were just like “a remnant” in comparison with the whole Jewish nation.—Rom. 11:5.

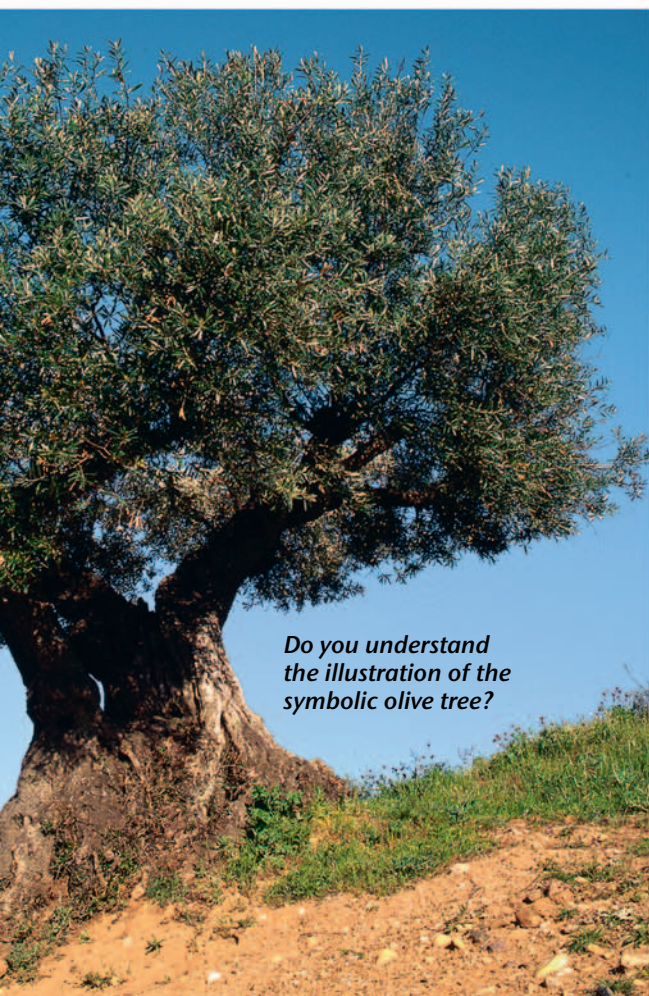
¹² How, though, would Jehovah complete “the full number” of those who were to become Abraham’s seed? (Rom. 11:12, 25) Notice the answer given by the apostle Paul: “It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all who spring from [natural] Israel are really ‘Israel.’ Neither because they are Abraham’s seed [offspring] are they all children [part of the Abrahamic seed] . . . That is, the children in the flesh are not really the children of God, but the children by the promise are counted as the seed.” (Rom. 9: 6-8) So physical descent from Abraham was not a rigid requirement for the fulfillment of Jehovah’s purpose regarding the seed.

The Symbolic Olive Tree

¹³ The apostle Paul goes on to compare those who become part of Abraham’s seed to branches on a symbolic olive tree.* (Rom. 11:21) This cultivated olive tree represents the fulfillment of God’s purpose with regard to the Abrahamic covenant. The root of the tree is holy and represents Jehovah as the one who gives life to spiritual Israel. (Isa. 10:20; Rom. 11:16) The trunk represents Jesus as the primary part of Abraham’s seed. The branches collectively represent “the full number” of those included in the secondary part of Abraham’s seed.

* Evidently, there is no typical or antitypical olive tree. Although natural Israel did produce kings and priests, the nation did not become a kingdom of priests. Kings in Israel were prevented by law from becoming priests. Therefore, natural Israel did not serve as a typical olive tree. Paul is illustrating how God’s purpose to produce “a kingdom of priests” is fulfilled in connection with spiritual Israel. This updates what was published in the August 15, 1983, *Watchtower*, pages 14-19.

13. What is represented by (a) the olive tree, (b) its root, (c) its trunk, and (d) its branches?



*Do you understand
the illustration of the
symbolic olive tree?*

Grafting Wild Olive Branches—Why?

■ Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella was a Roman soldier and farmer who lived in the first century C.E. He is best known for the 12 books that he wrote on country life and farming.

In his fifth book, he quotes this ancient proverb: “He who ploughs the olive-grove, asks it for fruit; he who manures it, begs for fruit; he who lops it, forces it to yield fruit.”

After describing trees that are thriving and yet fail to bear fruit, he recommends the following procedure: “It is a good plan to bore them with a Gallic auger and to put tightly into the hole a green slip taken from a wild olive-tree; the result is that the tree, being as it were impregnated with fruitful offspring, becomes more productive.”



¹⁴ In the illustration of the olive tree, the natural Jews who rejected Jesus are likened to olive branches that were “broken off.” (Rom. 11:17) They thereby lost the opportunity to become part of Abraham’s seed. But who would replace them? From the standpoint of the natural Jews, who prided themselves on their fleshly descent from Abraham, the answer would be unthinkable. But John the Baptizer had already forewarned them that if Jehovah wished to do so, he could raise up children to Abraham from the very stones.—Luke 3:8.

¹⁵ What, then, did Jehovah do to fulfill his purpose? Paul explains that branches from a wild olive tree were grafted onto the cultivated olive tree to replace those broken off. (***Read Romans 11:17, 18.***) Thus, spirit-anointed Christians of the nations, such as some in the congregation in Rome, were figuratively grafted onto this symbolic olive tree. In this way they became part of Abraham’s seed. Originally, they were like wild olive branches, not having any opportunity to be a part of this special covenant. But Jehovah opened the way for them to become spiritual Jews.—Rom. 2:28, 29.

¹⁶ The apostle Peter explains the situation this way: “It is to you [spiritual Israelites, including Gentile Christians], therefore, that he [Jesus Christ] is precious, because you are believers; but to those not believing, ‘the identical stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner,’ and ‘a stone of stumbling and a rock-mass of offense.’ . . . But *you are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies’ of the one that called you out of*

14, 15. Who were “broken off” the cultivated olive tree, and who were grafted onto it?

16. How did the apostle Peter explain the formation of the new spiritual nation?

darkness into his wonderful light. *For you were once not a people, but are now God's people*; you were those who had not been shown mercy, but are now those who have been shown mercy.”—1 Pet. 2:7-10.

¹⁷ Jehovah did something that many would view as totally unexpected. Paul describes what happened as “contrary to nature.” (Rom. 11:24) How was this so? Well, it would seem unusual, even unnatural, to graft a wild branch onto a cultivated tree; yet, that is what some farmers did in the first century.* In a similar way, Jehovah did something extraordinary. From a Jewish viewpoint, Gentiles were incapable of producing acceptable fruitage. However, Jehovah made these very ones part of “a nation” that produced Kingdom fruitage. (Matt. 21:43) Starting with the anointing of Cornelius—the first uncircumcised Gentile convert—in 36 C.E., the opportunity was opened up to uncircumcised non-Jews to be grafted onto this symbolic olive tree.—Acts 10:44-48.[#]

¹⁸ Does this mean that after 36 C.E., there was no longer any opportunity for natural Jews to become part of Abraham’s seed? No. Paul explains: “They [natural Jews] also, if they do not remain in their lack of faith, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree that is wild by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into the garden olive tree,

* See the box “Grafting Wild Olive Branches—Why?”

[#] This was at the end of the three-and-a-half-year opportunity that was given to the natural Jews to become part of the new spiritual nation. The prophecy concerning the 70 weeks of years foretold this development.—Dan. 9:27.

17. How was what Jehovah did “contrary to nature”?

18. What opportunity did natural Jews have after 36 C.E.?

how much rather will these who are natural be grafted into their own olive tree!”* —Rom. 11:23, 24.

“All Israel Will Be Saved”

¹⁹ Yes, Jehovah’s purpose with regard to “the Israel of God” is being fulfilled in a marvelous way. (Gal. 6:16) As Paul said, “all Israel will be saved.” (Rom. 11:26) In Jehovah’s due time, “all Israel”—that is, the complete number of spiritual Israelites—will serve as kings and priests in heaven. Nothing can cause Jehovah’s purpose to fail!

²⁰ As foretold, Abraham’s seed—Jesus Christ along with the 144,000—will bring blessings to “people of the nations.” (Rom. 11:12; Gen. 22:18) In this way, all of God’s people benefit from this arrangement. Truly, as we contemplate the outworking of Jehovah’s eternal purpose, we cannot help but be amazed at “the depth of God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge.” —Rom. 11:33.

* The Greek prefix translated “garden” at Romans 11:24 comes from a word meaning “good, excellent” or “well adapted to its ends.” It is used especially of things that fulfill the purpose for which they were made.

19, 20. What does Jehovah accomplish as illustrated by the symbolic olive tree?

Do You Remember?

- What do we learn about Jehovah from the way he fulfills his purpose?
- In Romans chapter 11, what is represented by . . .
 - the olive tree?
 - its root?
 - its trunk?
 - its branches?
- Why was the grafting process “contrary to nature”?



Following Christ, the Perfect Leader

THOSE who follow human rulers often experience disappointment. However, the effect of Christ's leadership on those who submit to it is quite different. Jesus said: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls." (Matt. 11:28, 29) Jesus' leadership is refreshing and uplifting. He is keenly interested in the lowly and downtrodden, inviting them to get under his kindly yoke. What, though, is involved in following Jesus' leadership?

"Christ suffered for you," wrote the apostle Peter, "leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely." (1 Pet. 2:21) How important is it for us to follow Jesus' footsteps? Imagine you were in a group that had to cross a minefield and only one of your number knew how to make it through safely. Would you not follow his steps closely, perhaps even stepping in his tracks? Similarly, our future security depends upon patterning our life after Jesus' example. Doing so includes listening to and obeying him and cooperating with those who represent him.

Hear and Obey

Near the end of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated: "Everyone that hears these sayings of mine and does them will be likened to a discreet man, who built his house upon the rock-mass. And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house,

but it did not cave in, for it had been founded upon the rock-mass."—Matt. 7:24, 25.

Jesus thus referred to a man who listens to and obeys his words as "discreet." Do we demonstrate by our heartfelt obedience that we respect and appreciate Christ's example, or are we inclined to choose from among Jesus' commands only those that are easy or convenient to obey? Jesus said: "I always do the things pleasing to [God]." (John 8:29) Let us strive to imitate that example.

In the first century, the apostles set a fine example of submitting to Christ's leadership. On one occasion, Peter said to Jesus: "Look! We left all things and have been following you." (Mark 10:28) Indeed, the apostles considered Jesus' leadership to be of such high value that they willingly left behind other things in order to follow him.—Matt. 4:18-22.

Cooperate With Christ's Representatives

Shortly before his death, Jesus mentioned another way in which we can follow his leadership. He said: "He that receives anyone I send receives me also." (John 13:20) In fact, Jesus spoke of his anointed representatives as his "brothers." (Matt. 25:40) After Jesus had been resurrected to the heavens, his "brothers" were appointed to act in his place, "substituting for Christ" as ambassadors inviting others to become reconciled to Jehovah God. (2 Cor. 5:18-20) Our recognizing Christ's leadership involves submission to his "brothers."

We do well to examine how we respond to timely Scriptural counsel presented in our Bible-based publications. By studying the Scriptures and attending congregation meetings, we are reminded of the sayings of Christ. (2 Pet. 3:1, 2) We show our heartfelt appreciation for this supply of spiritual food by regularly partaking of it. What, though, should be our reaction if certain counsel is repeated occasionally? For example, God's Word counsels Christians to marry "only in the Lord." (1 Cor. 7:39) For over a century, this subject has periodically been discussed in *The Watchtower*. Christ's brothers surely demonstrate their loving concern for our spiritual welfare by publishing articles on this and other inspired counsel. Paying attention to these reminders is one way to show that we are following our perfect Leader, Jesus Christ.

"The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established," states Proverbs 4:18. Yes, Jesus' leadership is progressive, not stagnant. Another way to cooperate with Christ's "brothers" is to have a

positive attitude toward any refinements in our understanding of Scriptural truths as published by "the faithful and discreet slave."—Matt. 24:45.

We also demonstrate our submission to Christ's "brothers" by cooperating with the appointed overseers in the Christian congregation. The apostle Paul said: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls." (Heb. 13:17) For example, an elder may give us encouragement related to the importance of having a regular Family Worship evening or may offer suggestions concerning some aspect of our field ministry. A traveling overseer may give us some helpful Scriptural counsel on a particular aspect of Christian living. Our willingly applying such counsel shows that we follow Jesus as our Leader.

The world is sadly lacking in effective leadership. But how refreshing it is to follow Christ's loving leadership! By all means, let us obey our Leader and cooperate with those he is using today.

Do you accept Scriptural counsel not to yoke yourself with an unbeliever?



COMPLETE TRUST IN JEHOVAH INSPIRES CONFIDENCE

“Jehovah himself will hear when I call to him.”—PS. 4:3.

KING DAVID has ruled Israel for some time, but he now faces a perilous situation. His scheming son Absalom has had himself declared king, and David has been forced to leave Jerusalem. He has also been betrayed by a confidant, and now, accompanied by a few loyal ones, he walks weeping and barefoot over the Mount of Olives. Moreover, Shimei, who belongs to a family in King Saul’s house, is throwing stones and dust at David while cursing him.—2 Sam. 15:30, 31; 16:5-14.

² Will this ordeal bring David down to Sheol in grief and disgrace? No, for he trusts in Jehovah. This is evident in the 3rd Psalm, composed by David regarding his flight. He also wrote the 4th Psalm. Both of these compositions express the conviction that God hears and answers prayers. (Ps. 3:4; 4:3) These psalms assure us that Jehovah is with his faithful servants day and night, blessing them with his support as well as peace and a sense of security. (Ps. 3:5; 4:8) Let us, therefore, consider these psalms and see how they inspire confidence and promote trust in God.

When ‘Many Rise Up Against Us’

³ “The heart of the men of Israel has come to be behind Absalom,” says a messenger. (2 Sam. 15:13) Wondering how Absalom has

been able to marshal such support, David asks: *“O Jehovah, why have my adversaries become many? Why are many rising up against me? Many are saying of my soul: ‘There is no salvation for him by God.’”* (Ps. 3:1, 2) Many Israelites think that Jehovah will not deliver David from calamity at the hands of Absalom and his cohorts.

⁴ But David is confident because he has implicit trust in God. He sings: *“Yet you, O Jehovah, are a shield about me, my glory and the One lifting up my head.”* (Ps. 3:3) David is sure that Jehovah will protect him just as a shield protects a soldier. Yes, the aging king is fleeing, his head covered and bent down in humiliation. But the Most High will change David’s condition to one of glory. Jehovah will enable him to stand erect, to raise his head and hold it high once again. David calls out with confidence that God will answer him. Do you display such trust in Jehovah?

⁵ By the words “the One lifting up my head,” David ascribes to Jehovah the help he expects to receive. *Today’s English Version* reads: “But you, O LORD, are always my shield from danger; you give me victory and restore my courage.” With regard to the expression “the One lifting up my head,” one reference work says: “When God lifts up . . . one’s ‘head,’ He fills one with hope and confidence.” Forced from Israel’s throne,

1, 2. (a) What perilous situation did David face? (b) We will discuss which psalms?

3. As shown at Psalm 3:1, 2, what was David’s situation?

4, 5. (a) David was sure of what? (b) What is the significance of the words “the One lifting up my head”?

David has reason to be despondent. However, ‘the lifting up of his head’ will result in renewed courage, confidence, and complete trust in God.

‘Jehovah Will Answer!’

⁶ Trusting in Jehovah and filled with confidence, David continues: *“With my voice I shall call to Jehovah himself, and he will answer me from his holy mountain.”* (Ps. 3:4) In keeping with David’s orders, the ark of the covenant, symbolizing God’s presence, has been taken to Mount Zion. (**Read 2 Samuel 15:23-25.**) Fittingly, then, David refers to having his prayer answered from Jehovah’s holy mountain.

⁷ Certain that prayer to God will not be in vain, David experiences no dread. Instead, he sings: *“As for me, I will lie down that I may sleep; I shall certainly awake, for Jehovah him-*

6. Why did David refer to having his prayer answered from Jehovah’s holy mountain?

7. Why did David experience no dread?

self keeps supporting me.” (Ps. 3:5) Even at night, when the danger of surprise attack is the greatest, David is not afraid to go to sleep. He is sure that he will awake, for his past experiences have made him absolutely confident that he can trust in God’s unfailing support. So can we if we adhere to “the ways of Jehovah” and never depart from him.—**Read 2 Samuel 22:21, 22.**

⁸ David’s confidence and complete trust in God are evident in another of his psalms, one containing these inspired words: “Jehovah is my light and my salvation. Of whom shall I be in fear? Jehovah is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be in dread? . . . Though against me an encampment should pitch tent, my heart will not fear. . . . One thing I have asked from Jehovah—it is what I shall look for, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of Jehovah and to look

8. How does Psalm 27:1-4 show that David trusted in God?

Even when he fled because of Absalom, David had confidence in Jehovah



with appreciation upon his temple.” (Ps. 27:1-4) If you share those sentiments and your circumstances permit, you will regularly meet with fellow worshippers of Jehovah.—Heb. 10:23-25.

⁹ Although David is faced with Absalom’s treachery and the disloyalty of so many others, he sings: *“I shall not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves in array against me round about. Do arise, O Jehovah! Save me, O my God! For you will have to strike all my enemies on the jaw. The teeth of wicked ones you will have to break.”*—Ps. 3:6, 7.

¹⁰ David does not have a vindictive spirit. If his enemies were to be ‘struck on the jaw,’ God would do it. King David has written a personal copy of the Law and knows that in it Jehovah declares: “Vengeance is mine, and retribution.” (Deut. 17:14, 15, 18; 32:35) It is also up to God to ‘break the teeth of the wicked ones.’ Breaking their teeth means rendering them powerless to do harm. Jehovah knows who the wicked are because “he sees what the heart is.” (1 Sam. 16:7) How grateful we are that God gives us faith and strength to stand firm against the chief wicked one, Satan, who will soon be abysed like a roaring but toothless lion fit only for destruction!—1 Pet. 5:8, 9; Rev. 20:1, 2, 7-10.

“Salvation Belongs to Jehovah”

¹¹ David realizes that Jehovah alone can bring about the deliverance that he so desperately needs. But the psalmist is not thinking only of himself. What about Jehovah’s favored people as a whole? Appropriately, David concludes his inspired composition with the words: *“Salvation belongs to Jehovah. Your blessing is upon your people.”* (Ps.

9, 10. Despite the words of Psalm 3:6, 7, why would you say that David did not have a vindictive spirit?

11. Why should we pray for fellow believers?

3:8) True, David has monumental problems, but he bears in mind Jehovah’s people in general and is confident that God will bless them. Should we not also keep our fellow believers in mind? Let us remember them in our prayers, asking Jehovah to give them his holy spirit so that they can muster up courage and can act with confidence in declaring the good news.—Eph. 6:17-20.

¹² Absalom’s life ends ingloriously—a warning to all who would abuse others, especially God’s anointed ones, such as David. (**Read Proverbs 3:31-35.**) A battle takes place, and Absalom’s forces are defeated. Absalom himself is riding away on a mule when his luxuriant hair becomes enmeshed in the fork of a low branch of a large tree. There he hangs—alive but helpless—until Joab kills him by driving three shafts into his heart.—2 Sam. 18:6-17.

¹³ Does David rejoice when he learns what has befallen his son? No. Instead, he paces the floor, weeps, and cries out: “My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! O that I might have died, I myself, instead of you, Absalom my son, my son!” (2 Sam. 18:24-33) Only Joab’s words bring David out of his nearly overwhelming grief. What a tragic end for Absalom, whose blind ambition prompted him to fight against his own father—Jehovah’s anointed—and bring disaster upon himself!—2 Sam. 19:1-8; Prov. 12:21; 24:21, 22.

David Again Expresses Trust in God

¹⁴ Like the 3rd Psalm, the 4th is an earnest prayer of David that gives evidence of his complete trust in Jehovah. (Ps. 3:4; 4:3) Perhaps David composed this song to express

12, 13. What happened to Absalom, and how did David react?

14. What can be said about the composition of Psalm 4?

relief and gratitude to God after the failure of Absalom's coup. Or it may have been written with Levite singers in mind. In either case, meditating on it can strengthen our trust in Jehovah.

¹⁵ David again manifests complete trust in God and displays confidence in the effectiveness of prayer. He sings: *"When I call, answer me, O my righteous God. In the distress you must make broad space for me. Show me favor and hear my prayer."* (Ps. 4:1) We can have similar confidence if we practice righteousness. Aware that Jehovah, the "righteous God," blesses his upright people, we can confidently pray to him through his Son with faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice. (John 3:16, 36) What peace this gives us!

¹⁶ At times, we may face a discouraging situation that robs us of confidence. Temporarily, this may have been true of David, for he sings: *"You sons of men, how long must my glory be for insult, while you keep loving empty things, while you keep seeking to find a lie?"* (Ps. 4:2) The expression "sons of men" evidently refers to mankind in an unfavorable sense. David's enemies 'loved empty things.' *The New International Version* of—

15. Why can we confidently pray to Jehovah through his Son?

16. Why may David have become discouraged?

How Would You Respond?

- What problems did David face because of Absalom?
- How does Psalm 3 inspire confidence?
- In what ways can Psalm 4 strengthen our trust in Jehovah?
- How can we benefit from complete trust in God?

fers this rendering: "How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?" Even if we become discouraged because of what others do, let us continue to pray earnestly and manifest complete trust in the only true God.

¹⁷ David's trust in God is clear from the words: *"So take knowledge that Jehovah will certainly distinguish his loyal one; Jehovah himself will hear when I call to him."* (Ps. 4:3) Courage and complete trust in Jehovah are required in order to remain loyal to him. For instance, these qualities are needed by a Christian family when an unrepentant relative is disfellowshipped. God honors those loyal to him and his ways. In turn, loyalty and complete trust in Jehovah promote joy among his people.—Ps. 84:11, 12.

¹⁸ What if someone says or does things that upset us? We can remain joyful if we do what David says: *"Be agitated, but do not sin. Have your say in your heart, upon your bed, and keep silent."* (Ps. 4:4) If we have been the object of unkind words or actions, let us not sin by retaliating. (Rom. 12:17-19) We can have our say in our heart while in bed. If we pray about the matter, we may see it in a different light and be moved to forgive out of love. (1 Pet. 4:8) Noteworthy in this regard is the apostle Paul's counsel, apparently based on Psalm 4:4: *"Be wrathful, and yet do not sin; let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil."*—Eph. 4:26, 27.

¹⁹ Stressing the need for trusting in God, David sings: *"Sacrifice the sacrifices of*

17. Explain how we might act in harmony with Psalm 4:3.

18. In harmony with Psalm 4:4, what should we do if we have been the object of unkind words or actions?

19. How can Psalm 4:5 help us with regard to our spiritual sacrifices?

Do you place complete trust in Jehovah?



righteousness, and trust in Jehovah.” (Ps. 4:5) Sacrifices offered by the Israelites had value only if the people had proper motives. (Isa. 1:11-17) For our spiritual sacrifices to be acceptable to God, we too must have proper motives and must trust in him completely. —Read Proverbs 3:5, 6; Hebrews 13:15, 16.

²⁰ David continues: *“There are many saying: ‘Who will show us good?’ Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Jehovah.” (Ps. 4:6) ‘The light of Jehovah’s face’ signifies divine favor. (Ps. 89:15) So when David prays: “Lift up the light of your face upon us,” he means ‘show us favor.’ Because we trust in Jehovah, we have his favor and great joy as we confidently do his will.*

20. What is signified by ‘the light of Jehovah’s face’?

²¹ Looking forward to God-given joys that surpass those of harvest-time, David sings to Jehovah: *“You will certainly give a rejoicing in my heart greater than in the time when their grain and their new wine have abounded.” (Ps. 4:7) We can be certain of experiencing heartfelt joy if we have a full share in today’s spiritual harvest work. (Luke 10:2) With the ‘populous nation’ of anointed ones taking the lead, we now rejoice as the number of ‘harvest workers’ keeps growing. (Isa. 9:3) Are you having a truly satisfying part in this joyful harvest?*

Confidently Press On With Complete Trust in God

²² David concludes this psalm with the words: *“In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for you yourself alone, O Jehovah, make me dwell in security.” (Ps. 4:8) When the Israelites kept Jehovah’s Law, they were at peace with*

him and felt secure. For instance, ‘Judah and Israel dwelt in security’ during Solomon’s reign. (1 Ki. 4:25) Those trusting in God enjoyed peace even when neighboring nations were hostile. Like David, we sleep peacefully because God makes us feel secure.

²³ Let us confidently press on in Jehovah’s service. May we also pray in faith and thus experience “the peace of God that excels all thought.” (Phil. 4:6, 7) What joy that brings us! And we can surely face the future with confidence if we maintain complete trust in Jehovah.

21. Of what are we assured if we have a full share in today’s spiritual harvest work?

22. In keeping with Psalm 4:8, how did the Israelites fare when they kept God’s Law?

23. What will we experience if we have complete trust in God?