

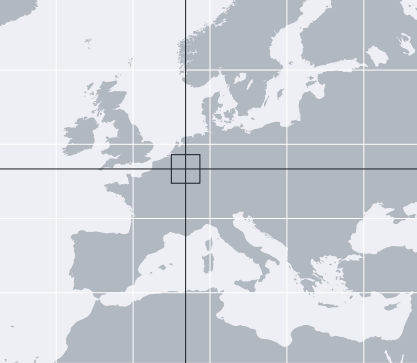
OCTOBER 2016

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
NOVEMBER 28–DECEMBER 25, 2016



COVER IMAGE:
LUXEMBOURG

Brothers working business territory witness to a mechanic in an auto repair garage. They use the tract *How Do You View the Bible?* to draw his attention to God's Word

POPULATION
562,958

PUBLISHERS
2,058

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2015)
3,895

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Endeavoring to Mirror Fine Examples

AS TOLD BY THOMAS MCLAIN

“Do you know how old I am?” I asked. “I know exactly how old you are,” replied Izak Marais, who called me in Colorado from Patterson, New York. Let me explain what led to that conversation.

I WAS born in Wichita, Kansas, U.S.A., on December 10, 1936, the oldest of four children. My parents, William and Jean, were devoted worshippers of Jehovah. Father was the company servant, the term then used for the one taking the lead in a congregation. My mother was taught Bible truths by her mother, Emma Wagner. Emma taught such truths to many individuals, including Gertrude Steele, who for years served as a missionary in Puerto Rico.* So I had many fine examples to imitate.

REMEMBERING FINE EXAMPLES

One Saturday evening when I was five years old, I was with my father, offering the *Watchtower* and *Consolation* (now *Awake!*) magazines to passersby on the street. At the time, the country was embroiled in World War II. An intoxicated doctor came by and verbally abused Father because of his Christian neutrality, saying that he was a coward and a draft dodger. The doctor put his face right up in front of Father’s and said, “Why don’t you hit me, you yellow coward!” I was frightened but so admired Father. He just kept on offering the magazines to the crowd that had gathered. Then a soldier walked by, and the doctor yelled, “Do something about this yellow coward!” The soldier could see that the man was drunk, so he told him, “Go home and sober up!” They both left. I look back with appreciation for the courage that Jehovah gave my father. He owned two barbershops in Wichita, and the doctor was one of his clients!

When I was eight years old, my parents sold their home and shops, built a small mobile home, and moved to Colorado to serve where the need was greater. We settled near Grand Junction, where my parents pioneered and worked part-time at farming and ranching. With Jehovah’s blessing and their zealous work, a congregation

* See the *Watchtower* magazines of May 1, 1956, pp. 269-272, and March 15, 1971, pp. 186-190, to learn more about the missionary work of members of the Steele family.



With my parents, going to a convention in Wichita in the 1940's

My father standing on a street corner, offering magazines to passersby

was started. There, on June 20, 1948, Father baptized me in a mountain stream, along with others who had accepted Bible truths, including Billie Nichols and his wife. They later went into the circuit work, as did their son and his wife.

We had close association and upbuilding spiritual discussions with many who were fully involved in the Kingdom work, especially the Steele family—Don and Earlene, Dave and Julia, and Si and Martha—who influenced my life very much. They showed me how putting the Kingdom first gives real meaning and joy to one's life.

MOVING AGAIN

When I was 19, Bud Hasty, a family friend, asked me to join him in the pioneer work in the southern United States. The circuit overseer asked us to move to Ruston, Louisiana, where a number of Witnesses had become inactive. We were told to hold all the meetings each week regardless of how many attended. We found a suitable meeting place and fixed it up. We held every meeting, but for some time, only the two of us were in attendance. We took turns, one presented a meeting part while the other answered all the

questions. If the part called for a demonstration, both of us would be on the platform with no one in the audience! Finally, an older sister started attending. Eventually, some Bible students, as well as some inactive ones, began coming to the meetings, and before long we had a thriving congregation.

One day, Bud and I met a Church of Christ minister, who talked about scriptures that I was not familiar with. This shook me up a bit and made me think more deeply about what I believed. For a week, I burned the midnight oil to get answers to the questions he had raised. That really helped me to make the truth my own, and I could hardly wait to meet up with another preacher.

Shortly thereafter, the circuit overseer asked me to move to El Dorado, Arkansas, to help that congregation. While there, I made frequent trips back to Colorado to appear before the draft board. On one trip, some fellow pioneers and I traveled together in my car, and we had an accident in Texas that rendered my car useless. We called a brother who came and took us to his home and then to the congregation meeting. There they announced that we had had a mishap,

In the ministry in Nairobi
with Mary and Chris Kanaiya



and the brothers kindly gave us financial help. The brother also sold my car for \$25.

We were able to get a ride to Wichita, where a close family friend, E. F. “Doc” McCartney, was pioneering. His twin sons, Frank and Francis, were and still are two of my best friends. They had an old car that they sold to me for \$25, exactly what I had been paid for my wrecked one. This was the first time I clearly saw that Jehovah provided a necessity for me because I was putting Kingdom interests first. On this visit, the McCartneys introduced me to a lovely theocratic sister, Bethel Crane. Her mother, Ruth, a zealous Witness in Wellington, Kansas, continued pioneering into her 90’s. Bethel and I were married less than a year later, in 1958, and she joined me as a pioneer in El Dorado.

THRILLING INVITATIONS

After considering the fine examples we had grown up with, we decided to make ourselves available for anything Jehovah’s organization invited us to do. We were assigned to special pioneer in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas. Then in 1962, we were thrilled to receive an invitation to the 37th

class of Gilead. To our delight, Don Steele was in the same class. Upon graduating, Bethel and I were assigned to Nairobi, Kenya. We felt a lump in our throat as we left New York, but how that lump turned to joy when we were met by our brothers at the airport in Nairobi!

We quickly grew fond of Kenya and our delightful ministry there. Our first progressive Bible study was with Chris and Mary Kanaiya. They still serve faithfully in the full-time service in Kenya. The following year, we were asked to go to Kampala, Uganda, as the first missionaries in that country. Those were exciting times because so many had a keen desire to learn Bible truths, and they became our fellow Witnesses. However, after three and a half years in Africa, we left to have a family. We returned to the United States. The day we left Africa, the lump in our throat was much bigger than the one we had when leaving New York. We had grown to love the people of Africa and hoped to return someday.

RECEIVING A NEW ASSIGNMENT

We settled on the western slope of Colorado, where my parents lived. Soon after, our first daughter, Kimberly, was born, and 17 months later, we had Stephany. We took our new assignment as parents very seriously, and we set out to instill the truth in our beautiful girls. We wanted to mirror the examples that had been set for us. It was sobering to think that while a fine example is a powerful influence for molding children, it is no guarantee that they will grow up to serve Jehovah. My younger brother and a sister left the truth. Hopefully, they will again imitate the fine examples that were also set for them.

We very much enjoyed rearing our daughters and always tried to do things as a family. Since we lived near Aspen, Colorado, we all took up skiing so that we could occasionally ski together. These periods of recreation afforded us time to converse with the girls as we rode up the ski lifts together. We would also go camping with them and

would have very enjoyable conversations around the campfire. Though young, they asked such questions as “What will I do when I grow up?” and “What kind of marriage mate do I want?” We endeavored to instill spiritual values in our daughters’ minds and hearts. We kept before them the goal of the full-time ministry and the wisdom of marrying only someone with a similar goal. We tried to help them appreciate that it is best not to marry too young. We coined the phrase “Stay free until you are at least 23.”

As our parents had done with us, we worked hard to attend the meetings and have a regular share in the field service as a family. We arranged to have some who were in the full-time ministry stay in our home. Also, we often talked with fondness about our time in the missionary work. We expressed the hope that someday all four of us might take a trip to Africa together. Our daughters really wanted to do that.

We always had a regular family study, during which we would act out situations that could happen at school. We would have the girls play the part of a Witness answering questions. They had fun learning in this way, and it gave them confidence. As they got older, they complained at times about having the family study. Once, in desperation, I told them to go to their rooms and that we would not have the study. They were shocked and started to cry and said that they wanted to study. Then we began to realize that we really were instilling appreciation for spiritual matters in their young hearts. They grew to love the study, and we allowed them to express themselves freely. It was hard at times, though, to hear them say that they did not agree with some aspect of the truth. Yet, we learned what was really in their hearts. After we reasoned with them, they would be satisfied with Jehovah’s thinking on matters.

ADJUSTING TO MORE CHANGES

This project of raising our daughters went by much faster than we could have imagined. With

the help and direction of God’s organization, we did our best to raise them to love Jehovah. We were so grateful when both daughters started pioneering after finishing high school, and they developed skills to support themselves financially. They moved to Cleveland, Tennessee, with two other sisters to serve where the need was greater. We missed them very much, but we were pleased that they were using their lives in the full-time service. Bethel and I then began to pioneer again, which opened up other joyful privileges for us. We did substitute circuit work and convention work.

Prior to moving to Tennessee, our daughters took a trip to London, England, and visited the branch office. There, Stephany, then 19, met Paul Norton, a young Bethelite. On a later trip, Kimberly met one of his workmates, Brian Llewellyn. Paul and Stephany got married—but after she turned 23. Brian and Kimberly got married the next year—when she was 25. So they did stay free until they were at least 23. We wholeheartedly approved of each one’s fine choice of a marriage mate.

Our daughters have told us that the examples we and their grandparents set helped them to obey Jesus’ command to ‘keep seeking first the Kingdom,’ even when they had difficult financial situations. (Matt. 6:33) In April 1998, Paul and Stephany were invited to the 105th class of Gilead, and afterward they were assigned to serve in Malawi, Africa. At the same time, Brian and Kimberly were invited to work at London Bethel and later were transferred to Malawi Bethel. We were extremely happy, since there is no better way for young people to use their lives.

ANOTHER THRILLING INVITATION

In January 2001, I received the phone call mentioned at the outset. Brother Marais, the overseer of Translation Services, explained that the brothers were arranging for a course in En-

glish comprehension for translators around the world, and at age 64, I was being considered for training to be one of the instructors. Bethel and I prayed about it and discussed the matter with our aged mothers to get their advice. They both wanted us to go, even though they would be without our help. I called back and said that we would be very happy to make ourselves available for this wonderful privilege.

Then my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I told her that we would stay and help my sister Linda with her care. "You will do nothing of the kind," Mother replied. "I would feel worse if you didn't go." Linda felt the same way. How we appreciated their self-sacrificing spirit as well as the help of the local friends in the area! The day after we left for the Watchtower Educational Center in Patterson, Linda called to tell us that Mother had died. As she would have encouraged us to do, we immersed ourselves in our new work.

Much to our delight, our first assignment was to the Malawi branch, where our daughters and their husbands were serving. What a reunion that was! Next, we taught the course in Zimbabwe and then in Zambia. After teaching the course for three and a half years, we were asked to return to Malawi to document the experiences of the Wit-

nesses who had suffered persecution there for maintaining their Christian neutrality.*

Again with a lump in our throat, in 2005 we returned home to Basalt, Colorado, where Bethel and I continue pioneering. In 2006, Brian and Kimberly moved next door to us to raise their two daughters, Mackenzie and Elizabeth. Paul and Stephany are still in Malawi, where Paul serves on the Branch Committee. Now that I am nearing 80 years of age, it gives me great pleasure to see younger men with whom I have worked over the years take on the responsibilities that I used to have. The joy we have is due, in large part, to the fine examples that were set for us and that we have endeavored to mirror for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

* For example, see the life story of Trophim Nsomba in the April 15, 2015, issue of *The Watchtower*, pp. 14-18.

Sharing in the ministry
with our grandchildren



With Paul, Stephany, Kimberly, and Brian
at the Malawi branch office, in the year 2002





“Do Not Forget Kindness to Strangers”

“Do not forget kindness to strangers.”—HEB. 13:2, ftn.

SONGS: 124, 79

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why might we need to adjust our view of strangers?

How did Boaz reflect Jehovah’s view of strangers in his dealings with Ruth?

How can we show kindness to strangers?

OVER 30 years ago, Osei,^[1] who was not a Witness at that time, arrived in Europe from Ghana. He recalls: “I soon realized that most people did not care about me. The climate was also quite a shock. When I left the airport and felt the cold for the first time in my life, I started crying.” Because he struggled with the language, Osei could not find a decent job for over a year. Being far away from his family, he felt alone and homesick.

² Think about how you would like others to act toward you if you were in a similar situation. Would you not appreciate a warm welcome at the Kingdom Hall, regardless of your nationality or skin color? In fact, the Bible urges genuine Christians: “Do not forget kindness to strangers.” (Heb. 13:2, ftn.) So let us consider the following questions: How does Jeho-

1, 2. (a) What challenges do many strangers face today? (See opening picture.) (b) What reminder did the apostle Paul give, and what questions does this raise?

vah view strangers? Why might we need to adjust our view of strangers? And how can we help those from a foreign background to feel at home in our congregation?

HOW JEHOVAH VIEWS STRANGERS

³ After Jehovah delivered his people from Egypt, he gave them a set of laws that showed special consideration for the many non-Israelites who had joined them. (Ex. 12:38, 49; 22:21) Since foreigners are often disadvantaged, Jehovah lovingly made provisions for them. The right to glean food was one such provision.—Lev. 19:9, 10.

⁴ Rather than order the Israelites to respect foreigners, Jehovah appealed to their empathy. (**Read Exodus 23:9.**) They knew ‘how it felt to be a foreigner.’ Even before they were reduced to slavery, the Hebrews were likely shunned by the Egyptians because of racial pride or religious prejudice. (Gen. 43:32; 46:34; Ex. 1:11-14) The Israelites had experienced a bitter life as foreign residents, but Jehovah expected them to treat the foreigner “like a native” among them.—Lev. 19:33, 34.

⁵ Today, we can be sure that Jehovah is equally concerned about people from a foreign background who attend meetings in our congregations. (Deut. 10:17-19; Mal. 3:5, 6) If we reflect on the challenges that they are facing, such as discrimination or the language barrier, we will look for ways to show them kindness and fellow feeling.—1 Pet. 3:8.

3, 4. According to Exodus 23:9, how were God’s ancient people expected to treat foreigners, and why?

5. What will help us to reflect Jehovah’s concern for people from a foreign background?

DO WE NEED TO ADJUST OUR VIEW OF STRANGERS?

⁶ First-century Christians learned to overcome the deep-seated prejudices that prevailed among the Jews. At Pentecost 33 C.E., those living in Jerusalem extended hospitality to newly converted Christians from various lands. (Acts 2:5, 44-47) The loving concern of Jewish Christians for fellow believers from other lands showed that they understood the meaning of the word “hospitality,” that is, “kindness to strangers.”

⁷ As the early Christian congregation grew, however, a situation that apparently involved discrimination arose. Greek-speaking Jews complained that their widows were not being treated fairly. (Acts 6:1) To settle this issue, the apostles appointed seven men to make sure that nobody was neglected. These men all had Greek names, which seems to indicate that the apostles wanted to ease any tensions over background that might have existed among the early Christians.—Acts 6:2-6.

⁸ Whether we realize it or not, we are all deeply influenced by our culture. (Rom. 12:2) Moreover, we likely hear neighbors, fellow workers, or schoolmates make derogatory remarks about those of another background, tribe, or skin color. How deeply are we affected by such biased views? And how do we react when someone makes fun of our nationality—maybe by exaggerating some feature of our culture?

⁹ For a while, the apostle Peter harbored prejudice against non-Jews, but

6, 7. What shows that first-century Christians learned to overcome deep-seated prejudices?

8, 9. (a) What might indicate that we are harboring prejudice or racial pride? (b) What must we root out of our heart? (1 Pet. 1:22)

he gradually learned to eradicate negative views from his heart. (Acts 10:28, 34, 35; Gal. 2:11-14) Likewise, if we detect any trace of prejudice or racial pride in us, we should make a conscious effort to root it out of our heart. (**Read 1 Peter 1:22.**) We might reflect on the fact that none of us deserve salvation; we are all imperfect humans, regardless of our nationality. (Rom. 3:9, 10, 21-24) So why should we feel superior to anyone else? (1 Cor. 4:7) We should have a view like that of the apostle Paul, who admonished his fellow anointed Christians that they were “no longer strangers and foreigners, but . . . members of the household of God.” (Eph. 2:19) Earnest effort to overcome prejudiced views regarding those who are of a different background will certainly help us to put on the new personality.—Col. 3:10, 11.

HOW TO SHOW KINDNESS TO STRANGERS

¹⁰ Boaz undoubtedly reflected Jehovah’s view of strangers in his dealings with Ruth the Moabitess. When he came to inspect his fields during the harvest, Boaz could not fail to notice a hardworking foreign woman gleaning behind his harvesters. On hearing that she had asked permission to glean—even though she was within her full right to do so—Boaz generously allowed her to glean even among the sheaves.—**Read Ruth 2:5-7, 15, 16.**

¹¹ The conversation that ensued shows that Boaz was clearly concerned about Ruth and her precarious situation as a foreigner. For one thing, he invited her

10, 11. How did Boaz reflect Jehovah’s view of strangers in his dealings with Ruth the Moabitess?

to stay with his group of young women so that she would not be harassed by the men who were working in the field. He even made sure that she would get enough food and water, just like the hired workers. In addition, Boaz did not speak down to the poor foreign woman but, instead, reassured her.—Ruth 2:8-10, 13, 14.

¹² Not only was Boaz moved by Ruth’s unselfish love for her mother-in-law, Naomi, but he was also impressed that she had become a worshipper of Jehovah. Boaz’ kindness was actually an expression of Jehovah’s loyal love toward a woman who had come to ‘seek refuge under the wings of the God of Israel.’ (Ruth 2:12, 20; Prov. 19:17) Similarly today, our kindly demeanor can help “all sorts of people” recognize the truth and sense how much Jehovah loves them.—1 Tim. 2:3, 4.

¹³ We can show kindness to newcomers from a foreign background by warmly greeting them at the Kingdom Hall. We may have noticed that new immigrants are sometimes shy and stay by themselves. Because of their upbringing or social status, they may feel inferior to those of another race or nationality. So we should take the initiative to show a warm and sincere interest in them. If available in your language, the *JW Language* app can help you learn how to greet newcomers in their mother tongue.—**Read Philippians 2:3, 4.**

12. What positive effect can kindness have on newcomers from a foreign background?

13, 14. (a) Why should we make an earnest effort to greet strangers at the Kingdom Hall? (b) How can you overcome awkward feelings about approaching individuals from another culture?



Are we warmly greeting newcomers when they arrive at the Kingdom Hall?
 (See paragraphs 13, 14)

¹⁴ You may feel awkward about approaching those from another culture. To overcome such feelings, you might tell them something about yourself. You may soon realize that you have more things in common than you have differences—real or imagined—and that each culture has its own strengths and weaknesses.

HELP ALL TO FEEL AT HOME

¹⁵ To help others feel at home in the congregation, honestly ask yourself, ‘If I were in a foreign country, how would I want to be treated?’ (Matt. 7:12) Be patient with those who are adjusting to a new country. At first, we may not fully understand their way of thinking or reacting. But rather than expect them to embrace our culture, why not accept

15. What will help us to be more understanding toward those who are adjusting to a new country?

them just the way they are?—**Read Romans 15:7, footnote.**

¹⁶ If we learn about the homeland and culture of those from a foreign background, we may find it easier to interact with them. We might include time in our family worship to do research on peoples we are not acquainted with in our congregation or territory. Another way to draw closer to those from another background is to invite them for a meal in our home. Since Jehovah has “opened to the nations the door to faith,” could we not open our own door to strangers who are “related to us in the faith”?—Acts 14:27; Gal. 6:10; Job 31:32.

¹⁷ By spending time with an immigrant family, we will better appreciate the extent of their efforts to adjust to our

16, 17. (a) What initiatives can we take in order to feel closer to those from another culture? (b) In what practical ways can we assist immigrants in our congregation?

culture. We may realize, though, that they need practical help to learn the language. Also, could we direct them to local agencies that may help them to obtain suitable housing or employment? Such initiatives may make a big difference in the life of a fellow believer.—Prov. 3:27.

¹⁸ Of course, immigrants will want to do their best to adjust to the culture of the new country. Ruth set a fine example in this regard. First, she showed respect for the customs of her new country by asking permission to glean. (Ruth 2:7) She did not take this right for granted as if others owed her something. Second, she readily expressed gratitude for the kindnesses shown to her. (Ruth 2:13) When immigrants display such a fine attitude, they are more likely to gain the respect of local residents and fellow believers.

18. What example of respect and gratitude can immigrants imitate today?

¹⁹ We rejoice that Jehovah in his undeserved kindness has allowed people from all backgrounds to hear the good news. In their home country, they may not have been able to take advantage of a Bible study or to associate freely with Jehovah’s people. But now that they have the opportunity to associate with us, should we not help them so that they no longer feel like strangers in our midst? Even though we may be limited in the material or practical help we can provide, our kindness to them reflects Jehovah’s love for them. As “imitators of God,” then, let us do our very best to welcome strangers among us.—Eph. 5: 1, 2.

19. What reasons do we have for welcoming strangers among us?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 1) Name has been changed.

Are we showing gracious hospitality to newcomers from other lands?
(See paragraphs 16, 17)





Maintain Your Spiritual Health While Serving in a Foreign Field

“In my heart I treasure up your saying.”—PS. 119:11.

THOUSANDS of Jehovah’s Witnesses today are taking an active part in the fulfillment of the vision to declare the good news “to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.” (Rev. 14:6) Are you among those who are learning another language? Are you perhaps serving as a missionary or a need-greater in a foreign land, or have you begun attending meetings in a foreign-language congregation in your homeland?

² As God’s servants, all of us need to give priority to our spiritual health and that of our family. (Matt. 5:3) At times, though, we may find it difficult to engage in meaningful personal study because of our busy routine. But those serving in a foreign field face yet other challenges.

³ In addition to learning a new tongue, those serving in a foreign field also need to make sure that they regularly feed their heart with solid spiritual food. (1 Cor. 2:10) How can they do that if they are unable to grasp fully the language spoken in the

1-3. (a) Whatever our circumstances, what should be our priority? (b) What specific challenges do those learning a new language face, and what questions does this raise? (See opening picture.)

SONGS: 142, 92

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What helped Daniel and the writer of Psalm 119 to maintain their spiritual health?

How can those serving in a foreign field maintain their spiritual health?

While serving in a foreign field, how can parents train their children spiritually?

congregation? And why should Christian parents make sure that God's Word reaches their children's hearts?

A THREAT TO SPIRITUAL HEALTH

⁴ The inability to grasp God's Word in a foreign language can pose a real threat to our spiritual health. In the fifth century B.C.E., Nehemiah showed concern when he learned that some children among the Jews who had returned from Babylon could not speak the Hebrew language. (**Read Nehemiah 13:23, 24.**) These children were actually losing their identity as God's servants because they could not fully understand the meaning of God's Word.—Neh. 8:2, 8.

⁵ Some Christian parents serving in a foreign-language field have come to realize that their children's interest in the truth has waned. Because of not fully understanding what was said at the meetings, the children were not really touched by the spiritual program that was being presented at the Kingdom Hall. "When talking about spiritual matters," says Pedro,^[1] who moved his family to Australia from South America, "the heart and emotions should be involved."—Luke 24:32.

⁶ When we read in a foreign tongue, our heart may not be as involved as it would be in our own language. Moreover, the inability to communicate well in another language can be mentally and spiritually draining. So while keeping alive our desire to serve Jehovah in a foreign-language field, we do well to safeguard our spiritual health.—Matt. 4:4.

4. What could pose a threat to our spirituality? Give an example.

5, 6. What have some parents serving in a foreign-language field come to realize, and why?

THEY SAFEGUARDED THEIR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

⁷ When Daniel and his companions were exiled, the Babylonians tried to assimilate them into their culture by teaching them "the language of the Chaldeans." Moreover, the court official in charge of their training gave them Babylonian names. (Dan. 1:3-7) The name given to Daniel referred to Bel, the main divinity of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar likely wanted to impress Daniel with the idea that his God, Jehovah, had been subjected by Babylon's god.—Dan. 4:8.

⁸ Although Daniel was offered food to eat from the king's delicacies, he "resolved in his heart" that he would not "defile himself." (Dan. 1:8) Because he kept studying "the sacred books" in his mother tongue, he maintained his spiritual health while living in a foreign land. (Dan. 9:2, ftn.) Thus, some 70 years after his arrival in Babylon, he was still known by his Hebrew name.—Dan. 5:13.

⁹ The writer of Psalm 119 found strength in God's Word to stand out as different. He had to put up with the scornful attitude of some members of the royal court. (Ps. 119:23, 61) Yet, he allowed God's sayings to touch his heart deeply.—**Read Psalm 119:11, 46.**

MAINTAIN YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

¹⁰ Although we may be very busy with theocratic and secular responsibilities,

7. How did the Babylonians attempt to assimilate Daniel into their culture and religion?

8. What helped Daniel to maintain his spiritual health while living in a foreign land?

9. As reflected in Psalm 119, what effect did God's Word have on the writer of the psalm?

10, 11. (a) As we study God's Word, what should be our aim? (b) How can we reach our goal? Illustrate.

we all need to make time for personal study and family worship. (Eph. 5:15, 16) Our aim, though, should not be simply to cover a certain number of pages or solely to prepare comments to participate at meetings. We want to make sure that we allow God's Word to reach our heart and strengthen our faith.

¹¹ To reach that goal, we should find a balance between keeping in mind the needs of others when studying and reflecting on our own spiritual needs. (Phil. 1:9, 10) We must recognize that when we prepare for the ministry, for the meetings, or for a talk, we may not necessarily apply what we read to ourselves. To illustrate: Although a chef has to taste dishes before serving them, he cannot live merely on the food he samples. If he wants to remain healthy, he has to prepare nutritious meals for himself.

Similarly, we should strive to nourish our heart with spiritual food that fills our personal needs.

¹² Many among those serving in a foreign-language field find it beneficial to study the Bible regularly in the 'language of their birth.' (Acts 2:8, ftn.) Even missionaries recognize that to remain strong in their foreign assignment, they cannot rely merely on the basic understanding of the spiritual food they get at the meetings.

¹³ Alain, who has been learning the Persian language for about eight years, admits: "When I prepare for meetings in Persian, I tend to focus on the language itself. Since my mind is mainly involved in an intellectual exercise, my heart is

12, 13. Why do many of those serving in a foreign-language field find it beneficial to study regularly in their mother tongue?

Make sure that the truth reaches the hearts of your children
(See paragraphs 14, 15)



not necessarily touched by the spiritual thoughts I am reading. That is why I regularly set aside time to study the Bible and other publications in my mother tongue.”

REACH YOUR CHILDREN'S HEARTS

¹⁴ Christian parents do well to make sure that God's Word gradually reaches their children's minds and hearts. After serving in a foreign-language field for over three years, Serge and his wife, Muriel, noticed that their 17-year-old son lacked joy in theocratic activities. “It annoyed him to go out in the ministry in another language, whereas before he loved preaching in his native language, French,” says Muriel. “When we realized that this situation had hindered our son from making spiritual advancement,” explains Serge, “we decided to move back to our former congregation.”

¹⁵ What factors might influence parents to move back to a congregation that uses the language their children best understand? First, they should determine whether they really have enough time and resources to instill love for Jehovah in their children while at the same time teaching them a foreign tongue. Second, they may notice in their children a lack of interest in spiritual activities or in the foreign-language field in which they are serving. In such circumstances, Christian parents might consider moving back to a congregation that uses the language their children best understand un-

til their children take a firm stand for the truth.—**Read Deuteronomy 6:5-7.**

¹⁶ On the other hand, some parents have found ways to instruct their children in their native tongue while attending meetings at a foreign-language congregation or group. Charles, a father of three girls ranging from 9 to 13 years of age, attends a Lingala-speaking group. He explains: “We made the decision to conduct study sessions and family worship with the children in our native language. But we also include practice sessions and games in Lingala so that they can learn this language while having fun.”

¹⁷ Kevin, a father of two girls, aged five and eight, has taken measures to compensate for their lack of understanding at meetings held in a foreign language. He explains: “My wife and I have a personal study with both girls in French, their mother tongue. We also set the goal of attending a meeting in French once a month, and we take advantage of our vacations to visit conventions held in our native language.”

¹⁸ Of course, it is up to each family to determine what will be most beneficial for the spiritual health of their children.^[2] (Gal. 6:5) Muriel, quoted earlier, admits that she and her husband had to sacrifice their preferences for the spiritual benefit of their son. (**Read Romans 15:1, 2.**) In retrospect, Serge thinks that

14. Of what should parents make sure, and why?

15. (a) What factors might influence parents to move back to a congregation that uses the language their children best understand? (b) What admonition does Deuteronomy 6:5-7 give to parents?

16, 17. How have some parents managed to train their children spiritually while in a foreign field?

18. (a) What principle found at Romans 15:1, 2 can help you to determine what will be in the best interests of your children? (b) What suggestions have other parents offered? (See endnote.)



Make an effort to learn the local language
and to participate in the meetings
(See paragraphs 16, 17)

they made the right decision. He states: “From the time we moved back to a French-speaking congregation, our son blossomed spiritually and got baptized. He is now serving as a regular pioneer. He is even considering returning to a foreign-language group!”

LET GOD’S WORD REACH YOUR HEART

¹⁹ In his love, Jehovah has made his Word, the Bible, available in hundreds of languages so that ‘all sorts of people may come to an accurate knowledge of the truth.’ (1 Tim. 2:4) He knows that humans can better fill their spiritu-

19, 20. How can we show our love for God’s Word?

al need when they read his thoughts in the language of their heart.

²⁰ Whatever our personal circumstances, though, we should be determined to feed our heart with solid spiritual food. By regularly studying the Scriptures in the language of our heart, we will maintain our spiritual health and that of our family and we will show that we truly treasure God’s sayings. —Ps. 119:11.

ENDNOTES:

[1] (paragraph 5) Names have been changed.

[2] (paragraph 18) For a discussion of Bible principles that can help your family, see the article “Raising Children in a Foreign Land—The Challenges and the Rewards” in the October 15, 2002, issue of *The Watchtower*.

Do You “Safeguard Practical Wisdom”?

AS THE story goes, a boy who lived in a remote village was poor. Thinking he was mentally slow, the townspeople laughed at him. When visitors came, some of the villagers made fun of him in front of their friends. They would hold out two coins, a large silver one and a small gold one that was worth twice as much as the silver coin. “Choose which one you want,” they would say. The boy would choose the silver coin and run away.

One day, a visitor asked the boy, “Don’t you know that the gold coin is twice as valuable as the silver one?” The little boy smiled and said, “Yes, I know.” “Then why do you take the silver coin?” the visitor asked. “If you take the gold one, you will have twice as much money!” “But,” said the boy, “if I take the gold coin, people will stop playing the game with me. Do you know how many silver coins I have collected?” The little boy in that story displayed a quality that adults could benefit from—practical wisdom.

The Bible states: “Safeguard practical wisdom and thinking ability. Then you will walk on your way in safety, and your foot will never stumble.” (Prov. 3:21, 23) So knowing what “practical wisdom” is and how to apply it actually involves our safety. This helps us to avoid stumbling spiritually, keeping our “foot” stable.

WHAT IS IT?

Practical wisdom differs from knowledge and understanding. A person who has **knowledge** accumulates information, or facts. Someone who has **understanding** can see how one fact relates to another. A person who has **wisdom** is able to combine knowledge with understanding and put them to work in a practical way.

For example, a person may in a relatively short time be able to read and understand the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* During his Bible study, he may answer correctly. He may begin attending congregation meetings and even give good comments. All of this may indicate that he is making spiritual progress, but does it mean that he has gained wisdom? Not necessarily. He may just have a quick mind. However, when he puts the truth into practice, using knowledge and understanding in a right way, he is becoming wise. If his decisions result in success, reflecting careful forethought, it becomes clear that he has manifested practical wisdom.

Matthew 7:24-27 recounts Jesus’ illustration of two men who each built a house. One of the men is described as being “discreet.” Thinking ahead about what could happen, that man built his house on rock. He was farsighted and practical. He did not reason that it would be cheaper or quicker to build his house on sand. Wisely, he thought of the long-term consequences of his actions. So when a storm came, his house was secure. Now the question is, How can we gain and safeguard this valuable quality of practical wisdom?

HOW CAN I GET IT?

First, note that Micah 6:9 says: “Those with practical wisdom will fear [God’s] name.” Fearing



How you discipline your children today will affect communication with them later

Jehovah's name implies respecting him. It means having wholesome reverence for what his name represents, including his standards. To respect someone, you need to know how he thinks. Then you can put your trust in him and learn from him, imitating his successes. If we are concerned about the long-term effects our actions will have on our relationship with Jehovah and if we base our decisions on his standards, then we are gaining practical wisdom.

Second, Proverbs 18:1 says: "Whoever isolates himself pursues his own selfish desires; he rejects all practical wisdom." If we are not careful, we could detach ourselves from Jehovah and his people. To avoid isolation, we need to spend time

with others who fear God's name and respect his standards. We need to be at the Kingdom Hall in person if at all possible, associating regularly with the Christian congregation. While at the meetings, we need to open our minds and hearts and allow what is said to touch us.

Adding to this, if we pour out our hearts to Jehovah in prayer, we will draw closer to him. (Prov. 3:5, 6) When we open our minds and hearts as we read the Bible and literature provided by Jehovah's organization, we get a glimpse of the long-term results of our actions and can act accordingly. We also need to open our hearts to counsel given by mature brothers. (Prov. 19:20) Then, instead of 'rejecting all

practical wisdom,’ we will be strengthening this important quality.

HOW WILL IT HELP MY FAMILY?

Practical wisdom can safeguard families. For example, the Bible urges a wife to have “deep respect” for her husband. (Eph. 5:33) How can a husband gain deep respect? If he forcefully or harshly demands it, he will have short-term results. To avoid confrontation, the wife of such a man may show him a measure of respect when he is present. Yet, would she be inclined to respect him when he is not there? Most likely that would not happen. He needs to consider what will bring long-term results. If he reflects the fruitage of the spirit, being loving and kind, he will *earn* her deep respect. Of course, a Christian wife should show respect for her husband whether he earns it or not.—Gal. 5:22, 23.

The Bible also says that a husband should love his wife. (Eph. 5:28, 33) In an effort to secure her husband’s love, a wife may reason that it is better to hide unpleasant things from him that he has a right to know. Really, though, does that reflect practical wisdom? Later, when he finds out what was hidden, what will be the result? Will he love her more? That could be difficult for him. Instead, if she finds an appropriate time to explain unpleasant things calmly, her husband will likely appreciate her honesty. Now his love for her will grow.

Children should obey their parents and be disciplined in Jehovah’s ways. (Eph. 6:1, 4) Does this mean that parents should make sure that a child has a long list of dos and don’ts? Much more is involved than just knowing the rules of the house or the punishment for misconduct. A parent with practical wisdom helps his child to understand why he should obey.

For example, suppose a child speaks disrespectfully to one of his parents. Speaking harshly or punishing on impulse may embarrass the child or force him into silence. Yet, in his heart he may be

resentful, which could cause him to draw away from his parents.

Parents developing practical wisdom will think about the way they discipline their children and the effect this will have on the children in the future. Parents should not quickly react to the embarrassment of the moment. Perhaps in private, they can calmly and lovingly reason with a child, explaining that Jehovah expects him to honor his parents for his everlasting benefit. Then when the child shows that he respects his parents, he will realize that he is honoring Jehovah. (Eph. 6:2, 3) This kind approach could touch the child’s heart. He senses his parents’ sincere care, and his respect for them grows. Now the stage is set for the child to ask for help when important matters come up later.

Some parents may feel bad about possibly hurting their child’s feelings, so they avoid giving correction. Yet, what will happen when the child gets older? Will he fear Jehovah and recognize the wisdom of accepting God’s standards? Will he be inclined to open his heart and mind to Jehovah, or will he isolate himself spiritually? —Prov. 13:1; 29:21.

A good sculptor plans ahead for what he is trying to shape. He does not just chip away and hope for the best. Parents with practical wisdom spend hours learning and applying Jehovah’s standards, thus fearing his name. By not isolating themselves from Jehovah and his organization, they gain practical wisdom and use it to build up their family.

Daily, we face decisions that could affect our lives for years to come. Instead of quickly coming up with a response and making a spur-of-the-moment decision, why not stop and think? Weigh the long-term consequences. Seek Jehovah’s guidance, and apply his divine wisdom. Then we will have safeguarded practical wisdom, and it will give us life.—Prov. 3:21, 22.



Strengthen Your Faith in What You Hope For

“Faith is the assured expectation of what is hoped for.”—HEB. 11:1.

WHAT a wonderful hope true Christians share! All of us, whether of the anointed or of the “other sheep,” hope to see the fulfillment of God’s original purpose and the sanctification of Jehovah’s name. (John 10:16; Matt. 6:9, 10) Such expectations are the most noble any human can cherish. We also long for the promised reward of everlasting life, either as part of God’s “new heavens” or as part of his “new earth.” (2 Pet. 3:13) In the meantime, we hope for the continued increase of the spiritual prosperity of God’s people.

² Those who are part of Satan’s world also have some sort of hope, but they may doubt whether theirs will ever be realized. For example, millions of gamblers may hope to win a lottery, but they could hardly feel sure about that. Real faith, on the other hand, is “the assured expectation” of our Christian hope. (Heb. 11:1) You may wonder, though, how can your expectation become more sure? And what are the benefits of having a strong faith in what you hope for?

1, 2. (a) How does the cherished hope of true Christians differ from the hope of people in Satan’s world? (b) What important questions will we now consider?

SONGS: 81, 134

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How did Jehovah’s ancient servants keep their faith strong?

What provisions do we have to strengthen our faith?

What benefits come from having a strong faith?

³ Faith is not a quality that sinful humans are born with; nor does it develop naturally. Christian faith is the result of God's holy spirit working on a receptive heart. (Gal. 5:22) The Bible does not say that Jehovah has or needs faith. Because Jehovah is almighty and all-wise, nothing can stop him from fulfilling his purpose. Our heavenly Father is so certain about the fulfillment of his promised blessings that to him they are already a reality. Therefore, he says: "They have come to pass!" **(Read Revelation 21:3-6.)** Christian faith stems from the fact that Jehovah is "the faithful God," who always does what he promises.—Deut. 7:9.

LEARNING FROM ANCIENT EXAMPLES OF FAITH

⁴ Chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews lists the names of 16 men and women of faith. The inspired writer referred to them and many others who "received a favorable witness because of their faith." (Heb. 11:39) All of them had an "assured expectation" that God would raise up the promised "offspring" to crush Satan's rebellion and to fulfill Jehovah's original purpose. (Gen. 3:15) Those faithful ones died before the promised "offspring," Jesus Christ, opened the way to heavenly life. (Gal. 3:16) Nevertheless, thanks to Jehovah's unfailing promises, they will be resurrected to perfect human life in an earthly paradise.—Ps. 37:11; Isa. 26:19; Hos. 13:14.

⁵ Hebrews 11:13 says of some who lived

3. True Christian faith is based on what fact?

4. What hope did faithful men and women of pre-Christian times cherish?

5, 6. On what did Abraham and his family members focus their hope, and how did they maintain strong faith? (See opening picture.)

in pre-Christian times: "In faith all of these died, although they did not receive the fulfillment of the promises; but they saw them from a distance and welcomed them." One of these was Abraham. Did he keep clear in mind the happy hope of life under the promised "offspring"? Jesus gave a clear answer to that question when he said to his opposers: "Abraham your father rejoiced greatly at the prospect of seeing my day, and he saw it and rejoiced." (John 8:56) The same was true of Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and many others who focused their hope on the future Kingdom, "whose designer and builder is God."—Heb. 11:8-11.

⁶ How did Abraham and his family keep their faith strong? They likely learned about God by listening to faithful older ones, from receiving divine revelations, or from reading reliable ancient documents. More important, they did not forget what they had learned but cherished God's promises and requirements and meditated on them. Because their hope was so sure, these men and women were prepared to suffer any hardship to remain loyal to God.

⁷ To keep our faith strong, Jehovah has kindly provided us with his complete Word, the Bible. To be "happy" and to "succeed," we must regularly read God's Word, daily if possible. (Ps. 1:1-3; **read Acts 17:11.**) Then, like pre-Christian worshippers of Jehovah, we need to keep meditating on God's promises and be obedient to his requirements. Jehovah has also blessed us with an abundant supply of spiritual food pro-

7. What provisions has Jehovah kindly made for us to develop a strong faith, and what must we do with those provisions?

vided through “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45) Thus, by cherishing what we learn from the spiritual provisions that Jehovah has made available, we will be like the ancient examples of faith who had an “assured expectation” of their Kingdom hope.

⁸ Prayer also played a vital part in keeping the faith of pre-Christian witnesses strong. Their faith was strengthened as they experienced God’s answers to their prayers. (Neh. 1:4, 11; Ps. 34:4, 15, 17; Dan. 9:19-21) We too can pour out our concerns to Jehovah, knowing that he will hear us and strengthen us to endure with joy. And when our prayers are answered, our faith gets stronger. **(Read 1 John 5:14, 15.)** Since faith is an aspect of the fruitage of the spirit, we need to “keep on asking” for God’s spirit, as Jesus urged us to do.—Luke 11:9, 13.

⁹ Our prayers, though, should not be limited to asking God for personal help. “Too numerous to recount” are the “wonderful works” we can thank and praise Jehovah for daily! (Ps. 40:5) Also, our prayers should reflect that we “keep in mind those in prison, as though [we] were imprisoned with them.” And we should pray for our worldwide brotherhood, especially “those who are taking the lead among [us].” Our hearts are touched when we see how Jehovah answers our united prayers!—Heb. 13:3, 7.

THEY REFUSED TO COMPROMISE

¹⁰ In Hebrews chapter 11, the apostle

8. How can prayer strengthen our faith?

9. In addition to praying for ourselves, for whom else should we pray?

10. What examples do we have of servants of God who refused to compromise their integrity, and what gave them the strength to do so?

Paul describes the trials that many unnamed servants of God endured. For example, the apostle mentions women of faith who lost their sons in death but later received them back by resurrection. Then he mentions others who “would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain a better resurrection.” (Heb. 11:35) Though we cannot be sure whom Paul had in mind, some, like Naboth and Zechariah, were stoned to death for obeying God and doing his will. (1 Ki. 21:3, 15; 2 Chron. 24:20, 21) Daniel and his companions clearly had the opportunity to “accept release” by compromising their integrity. Instead, their faith in God’s power enabled them, so to speak, to ‘stop the mouths of lions’ and ‘quench the force of fire.’—Heb. 11:33, 34; Dan. 3:16-18, 20, 28; 6:13, 16, 21-23.

¹¹ Because of their faith, such prophets as Micaiah and Jeremiah “received their trial by mockings . . . and prisons.” Others, like Elijah, “wandered about in deserts and mountains and caves and dens of the earth.” All of them endured because they had an “assured expectation of what is hoped for.”—Heb. 11:1, 36-38; 1 Ki. 18:13; 22:24-27; Jer. 20:1, 2; 28:10, 11; 32:2.

¹² After describing various men and women of faith, Paul highlighted the most outstanding example of all—our Lord Jesus Christ. “For the joy that was set before him,” states Hebrews 12:2, “he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Indeed,

11. What trials did some of the prophets endure because of their faith?

12. Who set the most outstanding example of enduring trials, and what helped him to do so?

we should “consider closely” Jesus’ example of faith in the face of the severest of trials. **(Read Hebrews 12:3.)** Like Jesus, early Christian martyrs, such as the disciple Antipas, refused to compromise their integrity. (Rev. 2:13) They would have the reward of a resurrection to heavenly life—surpassing the “better resurrection” that ancient men of faith looked forward to. (Heb. 11:35) Sometime after the Kingdom’s birth in 1914, all such faithful anointed ones, who were sleeping in death, were raised to spirit life in heaven to share with Jesus in his rulership over mankind.—Rev. 20:4.

MODERN-DAY EXAMPLES OF FAITH

¹³ Millions of modern-day worshippers of God are following the example of Jesus by keeping their hope in clear focus and not allowing trials to weaken their faith. Consider the example of Rudolf Graichen, who was born in Germany in 1925. He recalled pictures of Bible scenes that hung on the walls of his home. “One picture,” he wrote, “showed the wolf and the lamb, the kid and the leopard, the calf and the lion—all in

13, 14. What trials did Rudolf Graichen experience, and what helped him to endure?

Are you benefiting from modern-day examples of faith in your congregation?

(See paragraphs 15, 16)



peace, being led by a little boy. . . . Such pictures made a lasting impression on me.” (Isa. 11:6-9) Despite many years of cruel persecution, first by the Nazi Gestapo and later by the Communist Stasi of East Germany, Rudolf maintained his strong faith in an earthly paradise.

¹⁴ Other severe trials faced by Rudolf were the loss of his beloved mother, who died of typhus in the Ravensbrück concentration camp, and seeing his father weaken in faith to the point that he signed a document in which he renounced being one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. After being released from prison, Rudolf enjoyed the privilege of serving as a circuit overseer and was then invited to Gilead School. He was assigned as a missionary to Chile, where he again served as a circuit overseer. But Rudolf’s trials had still not ended. A year after he married Patsy, a fellow missionary, their baby daughter died. Later, his beloved wife, who was only 43 years old, also died. Rudolf endured all these trials and, although aged and sickly, was serving as a regular pioneer and an elder when his life story appeared in the August 1, 1997, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 20-25.^[1]

¹⁵ Jehovah’s Witnesses continue to rejoice in their hope despite intense and ongoing persecution. For example, many of our brothers and sisters are imprisoned in Eritrea, Singapore, and South Korea, in most cases because of acting in harmony with Jesus’ words not to take up the sword. (Matt. 26:52) Among these hundreds of prisoners are Isaac, Negede, and Paulos, who have

been in an Eritrean prison camp for over 20 years! Denied the freedom to support their aging parents and to marry, these brothers have remained loyal in spite of severe mistreatment. The positive look on their faces, as seen on our jw.org website, shows that they have kept their faith strong. Even their prison guards have come to respect them.

¹⁶ Most of Jehovah’s people have not had to endure severe persecution. Their tests of faith have been different. Many have had to endure poverty or have suffered during civil wars or natural disasters. Others are like Moses and the patriarchs in that they have given up a life of worldly ease or fame. They fight hard to resist being tempted to live a materialistic, self-centered lifestyle. What is it that enables them to do this? Their love for Jehovah and their strong faith in the promise that he will correct all injustices and reward his faithful servants with everlasting life in a new world of righteousness.—**Read Psalm 37:5, 7, 9, 29.**

¹⁷ In this article, we have seen how meditation on God’s promises and regular prayer will keep our faith strong. That, in turn, will enable us to endure trials of faith as we focus on our Christian hope with an “assured expectation.” But the Bible’s description of faith involves more, as the next article will show.

16. How can strong faith protect you?

17. What are you determined to do, and what will be discussed in the next article?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 14) See also the article “Despite Trials, My Hope Has Remained Bright” in the April 22, 2002, issue of *Awake!*, which tells the life story of Andrej Hanák from Slovakia.

15. What current examples do we have of Jehovah’s Witnesses joyfully enduring persecution?



Exercise Your Faith in Jehovah's Promises

*“Faith is . . . the convincing evidence of realities
that are not seen.”—HEB. 11:1, fn.*

SONGS: 54, 125

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How does Noah's example
help us to understand what
it means to have faith?

In what ways must we
exercise our faith?

Why are both faith
and love important?

CHRISTIAN faith is a precious quality. Not all humans possess it. (2 Thess. 3:2) However, Jehovah has given to each one of his worshippers “a measure of faith.” (Rom. 12:3; Gal. 5:22) All who have it should be deeply grateful.

² Jesus Christ said that his heavenly Father draws people to himself through His Son. (John 6:44, 65) Acquiring faith in Jesus, in turn, makes it possible for an individual to gain forgiveness of sins. That, then, opens up the prospect of enjoying an everlasting relationship with Jehovah. (Rom. 6:23) What did we do to deserve such a wonderful blessing? As sinners, the only thing we deserve is death. (Ps. 103:10) But Jehovah saw a potential for good in us. Out of his undeserved kindness, he opened our heart to the good news. So we began to exercise faith in Jesus with

1. How should we view Christian faith?
- 2, 3. (a) What blessings are possible for someone who has faith?
(b) What questions will we now consider?

everlasting life in view.—**Read 1 John 4:9, 10.**

³ But what exactly is faith? Is it limited to a mental grasp of the blessings that God has in store for us? And more important, in what ways must we exercise our faith?

“EXERCISE FAITH IN YOUR HEART”

⁴ Faith involves much more than a mental understanding of God’s purpose. It is a powerful motivating force that impels a person to act in harmony with God’s will. Faith in God’s means of salvation moves a believer to share the good news with others. The apostle Paul explained: “If you publicly declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith *in your heart* that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved. For *with the heart* one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation.” —Rom. 10:9, 10; 2 Cor. 4:13.

⁵ Clearly, our prospect of enjoying eternal life in God’s new world depends on our having faith and keeping it strong. The need to keep our faith healthy can be likened to a plant’s need for water. Unlike an artificial plant, a living plant keeps changing. A live plant either withers because of a lack of water or continues to thrive with a regular supply of moisture. If deprived of sufficient water, a once healthy plant will eventually die. So, too, our faith. It will wither and die if neglected. (Luke 22:32; Heb. 3:12) But if we give it due attention, our faith will stay alive and

keep “growing,” and we will be “healthy in faith.”—2 Thess. 1:3; Titus 2:2.

THE BIBLE’S DESCRIPTION OF FAITH

⁶ The Bible’s description of faith is found at **Hebrews 11:1. (Read.)** Faith focuses on two kinds of things that are not visible to us: (1) “What is hoped for”—this may include future events that have been promised to happen but that have not yet occurred, such as the end of all wickedness and the coming new world. (2) “Realities that are not seen.” In this context, the Greek word translated “evident demonstration” refers to “convincing evidence” of an invisible reality, such as the existence of Jehovah God, Jesus Christ, the angels, and the activities of the heavenly Kingdom. (Heb. 11:3) How do we prove that our hope is alive and that we believe in the unseen things spoken of in God’s Word? By our words and deeds—without which our faith would be incomplete.

⁷ Hebrews 11:7 highlights the faith of Noah who, “after receiving divine warning of *things not yet seen*, showed godly fear and constructed an ark for the saving of his household.” Noah exercised his faith by building the gigantic ark. Without doubt, his neighbors must have asked him why he was building such a colossal structure. Did Noah keep quiet or tell them to mind their own business? By no means! His faith moved him to witness boldly and to warn his contemporaries of God’s coming judgment. Quite likely, Noah

4. Explain why faith is more than just a mental process.

5. Why is faith so important, and how can we keep it strong? Illustrate.

6. In what two ways does Hebrews 11:1 describe faith?

7. How does Noah’s example help us to understand what it means to have faith? (See opening picture.)

repeated to the people the exact words that Jehovah had spoken to him: “I have decided to put an end to all flesh, because the earth is full of violence on account of them . . . I am going to bring floodwaters upon the earth to destroy from under the heavens all flesh that has the breath of life. Everything on the earth will perish.” Also, Noah no doubt explained to the people the only means of escape, repeating God’s command: “You must go into the ark.” Thus, Noah further exercised his faith by being “a preacher of righteousness.”—Gen. 6:13, 17, 18; 2 Pet. 2:5.

⁸ The letter of James was likely written shortly after the apostle Paul wrote his inspired description of faith. Like Paul, James explained that true Christian faith is not just a matter of believing; action is involved. “Show me your faith without the works,” wrote James, “and I will show you my faith by my works.” (Jas. 2:18) James goes on to show the clear difference between mere belief and the exercising of one’s faith. The demons believe that God exists, but

8. What was the disciple James inspired to explain regarding the meaning of true Christian faith?

Exercise your faith by sharing the good news at every opportunity
(See paragraph 12)



they have no true faith. Rather, they faithlessly work against the fulfillment of God's purposes. (Jas. 2:19, 20) By contrast, referring to another ancient man of faith, James asks: "Was not Abraham our father declared righteous by works after he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that his faith was active along with his works and his faith was perfected by his works." Then to drive home the point that faith must be shown by works, James adds: "Just as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."—Jas. 2:21-23, 26.

⁹ Over three decades later, the apostle John wrote his Gospel and three letters. Did he appreciate the depth of meaning that other Bible writers had been inspired to explain respecting true Christian faith? More than any other Bible writer, John used the Greek verb that is sometimes translated "exercise faith."

¹⁰ For example, John explained: "The one who exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life; the one who disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him." (John 3:36) Christian faith includes a demonstration of obedience to Jesus' commands. John often quoted Jesus' words that show that exercising faith is an ongoing process.—John 3:16; 6:29, 40; 11:25, 26; 14:1, 12.

¹¹ How grateful we should be that Jehovah used his holy spirit to reveal the

truth to us and to enable us to exercise faith in the good news! **(Read Luke 10:21.)** We should never cease thanking Jehovah for drawing us to himself through his Son, "the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith." (Heb. 12:2) To show our appreciation for such undeserved kindness, we should keep strengthening our faith through prayer and study of God's Word.—Eph. 6:18; 1 Pet. 2:2.

¹² We should keep exercising our faith in Jehovah's promises. We must do this in ways that are clearly evident to others. For example, we keep on preaching about God's Kingdom and sharing in the work of making disciples. We also keep working "what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Gal. 6:10) And we work hard to "strip off the old personality with its practices," guarding against anything that could weaken us spiritually.—Col. 3:5, 8-10.

FAITH IN GOD IS PART OF OUR FOUNDATION

¹³ "Without faith," the Bible states, "it is impossible to please God well, for whoever approaches God must believe that he exists and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Heb. 11:6, ftn.) God's Word describes "faith in God" as part of the "foundation" that is needed for anyone to become and remain a true Christian. (Heb. 6:1) On that foundation, Christians must "supply to [their] faith" other important qualities "in order to keep

9, 10. How does the apostle John help us to understand the importance of exercising our faith?

11. How can we show appreciation for knowing the truth?

12. In what ways should we exercise our faith?

13. How important is "faith in God," and to what is it likened, and why?

[themselves] in God's love."—**Read 2 Peter 1:5-7; Jude 20, 21.**

¹⁴ The Christian Bible writers emphasized the importance of faith by referring to it hundreds of times. No other Christian quality is mentioned as often. Does this mean that faith is the most important Christian quality?

¹⁵ Comparing faith with love, Paul wrote: "If I have all the faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2) Jesus emphasized the all-important quality of love for God when he answered the question: "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matt. 22:35-40) Love embraces many essential Christian qualities, including faith. "Love," the Bible states, "believes all things." It has faith in the things God has said in his Word of truth.—1 Cor. 13:4, 7.

¹⁶ Because of the importance of faith and love, Christian Bible writers highlighted these qualities together multiple times, often in the same sentence or phrase. Paul urged his brothers to "put on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*." (1 Thess. 5:8) Peter wrote: "Though you never saw [Jesus], you *love* him. Though you do not see him now, yet you exercise *faith* in him." (1 Pet. 1:8) James asked his anointed brothers: "Did not God choose those who are poor from the world's standpoint to be rich in *faith* and heirs of the Kingdom, which he promised to those who *love* him?" (Jas.

14, 15. Compared with love, how important is faith?

16, 17. How are faith and love highlighted together in the Scriptures, but which is the greatest, and why?

2:5) John wrote: "This is [God's] commandment: that we have *faith* in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and *love* one another."—1 John 3:23.

¹⁷ Although faith is essential, aspects of this quality will pass away when we see the fulfillment of God's promises and experience the reality of our Christian hope. But the need to grow in love for God and for our neighbor will never cease. Thus, Paul could write: "Now, however, these three remain: faith, hope, love; but the greatest of these is love."—1 Cor. 13:13.

A POWERFUL DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH

¹⁸ In our present day, Jehovah's people have been exercising their faith in God's established Kingdom. This has resulted in the development of a worldwide spiritual paradise that has over eight million inhabitants. It is a place that abounds with the fruitage of God's spirit. (Gal. 5:22, 23) What a powerful demonstration of true Christian faith and love!

¹⁹ No human can take credit for this. It has been accomplished by our God. This wonderful work is bringing "fame to Jehovah, an everlasting sign that will never perish." (Isa. 55:13) Indeed, it is "God's gift" that we be "saved through faith." (Eph. 2:8) Our spiritual paradise will continue to grow and to flourish until the whole earth is filled with perfect, righteous, and happy humans to the eternal praise of Jehovah's name. May we keep on exercising our faith in Jehovah's promises!

18, 19. What powerful demonstration of faith do we see today, and who deserves the credit for this?

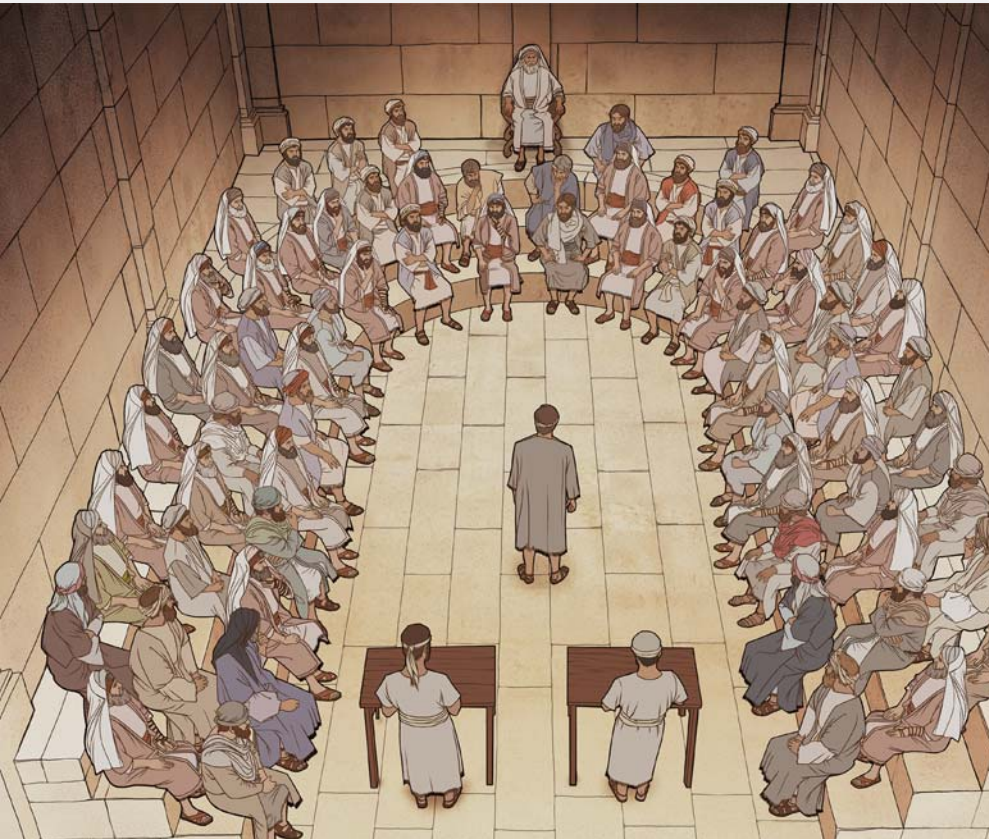
How much freedom did Rome grant to the Jewish authorities in Judea in the first century?

DURING this time, Judea was ruled by the Romans, who were represented by a governor with troops at his command. His main concern was to collect taxes for Rome and to maintain peace and order. The Romans took an interest in suppressing outlawed activities and in bringing to justice any who caused disturbances. Otherwise, the Romans were usually content to leave the day-to-day administration of the province in the hands of local leaders.

The Sanhedrin functioned as the Jews' supreme court and governing council for matters of Jewish law. Lower courts existed throughout Judea. Most civil and criminal cases were probably handled by such courts without interference from Roman rulers. One limitation imposed on the competence of Jewish

courts, however, concerned the execution of criminals—a right that the Romans generally reserved for themselves. A well-known exception was when the members of the Sanhedrin tried Stephen and had him stoned to death.—Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60.

The Jewish Sanhedrin thus exercised extensive jurisdiction. Yet, “its most serious restriction,” notes scholar Emil Schürer, “was that the Roman authorities could at any time take the initiative themselves and proceed independently, as in fact they did when they suspected a political offence.” One example of such a case occurred under the oversight of military commander Claudius Lysias, who took into custody the apostle Paul, a Roman citizen.—Acts 23:26-30.



The Jewish Sanhedrin in session

Is it believable that in ancient times someone would actually oversow another man's field with weeds?

AT MATTHEW 13:24-26, Jesus is quoted as saying: “The Kingdom of the heavens may be likened to a man who sowed fine seed in his field. While men were sleeping, his enemy came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat and left. When the stalk sprouted and produced fruit, then the weeds also appeared.” Different writers have questioned whether this illustration should be considered real, yet ancient Roman legal writings suggest that it should.

“Sowing darnel in a field for purposes of revenge . . . was a crime under Roman legislation. The necessity for a law on the subject suggests that the action was not infrequent,” says one Bible dictionary. Legal scholar Alastair Kerr explains that in 533 C.E., Roman Emperor Justinian published his *Digest*, a summary of Roman law and excerpts from jurists of the classical period of the law (about 100-250 C.E.). According to this work (*Digest*, 9.2.27.14), the jurist Ulpian referred to a case considered by the second-century Roman statesman Celsus. Weeds had been sown in another person's field, and as a result, a crop was ruined. The *Digest* considers the legal remedies available to the owner, or tenant farmer, in order to obtain compensation from the perpetrator for the loss suffered.

That such malicious mischief occurred within the Roman Empire in ancient times indicates that the situation Jesus described was true to life.



This 1468 copy of the *Digest* by Emperor Justinian is one of many records that provide details about legal issues in ancient times

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