

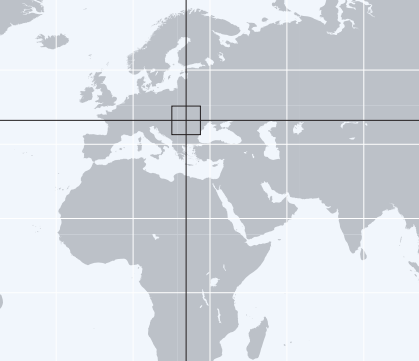
MARCH 2017

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:  
MAY 1-28, 2017



COVER IMAGE:  
**ROMANIA**

This elder and his wife find that Sunday after the meeting is a good time to reach sheeplike people in northern Romania. These include two neighbors who are combing the wool from literal sheep in that area.

PUBLISHERS  
**40,575**

BIBLE STUDIES  
**25,623**

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE  
(2015)  
**78,300**

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Christians need to have a balanced view of how to show respect and honor. To whom is honor due? Why? This article will help us to answer those questions, and it also highlights the benefits of rendering honor to those to whom it is due.

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### 13 WEEK OF MAY 8-14 Exercise Faith—Decide Wisely!

According to the Bible, we should not be unsteady, unable to decide. But why do we need to make wise decisions? What will help us to do so? And should we at times change a decision that we have made? This article will help us to answer those questions.

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### 18 WEEK OF MAY 15-21 Serve Jehovah With a Complete Heart!

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Being imperfect, all of us make mistakes. However, does that mean we cannot please Jehovah? In these two articles, we will discuss the examples of four kings of Judah and the mistakes they made, some of which were very serious. Yet, Jehovah viewed those kings as having a complete heart. Will God view us as having a complete heart, despite mistakes we make?

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In 1955, typing up a talk while on Staten Island, New York

# I Have Benefited From Walking With Wise Ones

AS TOLD BY WILLIAM SAMUELSON

ON A crisp morning in Brookings, South Dakota, U.S.A., a chill lingered in the air. It reminded me that freezing weather would soon take control of the area. You might be surprised to know, however, that on that very day, a small group of us were shivering in an unheated barn. We were standing before a livestock watering trough that was partially filled with cold water! Let me tell you some personal history so that you will understand why.

## EARLY FAMILY LIFE

I was born on March 7, 1936, the youngest of four children. We lived on a small farm in eastern South Dakota. Farming was an important part of our family's life, but it was not the *most* important part. My parents got baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses in 1934. They had made a ded-

ication to our heavenly Father, Jehovah, so doing God's will was their first priority. My dad, Clarence, and later my uncle Alfred, served as company servant (now called coordinator of the body of elders) in our small congregation in Conde, South Dakota.

Attending Christian meetings and going from house to house to tell others about the Bible's marvelous hope for the future was a regular part of our family's routine. My parents' example and the training they gave us had a deep, favorable impact on us children. My sister, Dorothy, and I became Kingdom publishers when we were six. In 1943, I joined the Theocratic Ministry School, which had just become a feature of our meetings.

Conventions and assemblies were an important part of our lives. Brother Grant Suiter was



the visiting speaker at a convention in 1949 at Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I can still remember his talk, “It Is Later Than You Think!” He emphasized that all dedicated Christians need to use their lives to the full in proclaiming the good news of God’s established Kingdom. That motivated me to make my dedication to Jehovah. At the next circuit assembly, at Brookings, I found myself in that chilly barn, as described earlier, waiting to get baptized. The galvanized steel trough was the baptismal “pool” for four of us on November 12, 1949.

I then made the pioneer ministry my goal. I began pioneering on January 1, 1952, when I was 15. The Bible says: “The one walking with the wise will become wise,” and there were many wise ones in my family who supported my decision to pioneer. (Prov. 13:20) Uncle Julius, who was 60 years old, became my pioneer partner. Despite our age difference, we had very enjoyable times together in the ministry. I gleaned much profitable wisdom from his experience in life. Dorothy soon became a pioneer too.

## PERSONAL INTEREST FROM CIRCUIT OVERSEERS

Throughout my youth, my parents invited many circuit overseers and their wives to stay with us. One couple, Jesse and Lynn Cantwell, helped me greatly. It was, in part, due to their encouragement that I decided to pioneer. Their personal interest fostered in me a real desire to set theocratic goals. When they were serving congregations nearby, they sometimes invited me to go with them in the ministry. How pleasurable and upbuilding that was!

Bud Miller and his wife, Joan, next served us in the traveling work. By then I was 18 years old and facing the question of military service. My local draft board initially classified me in a way that I felt was not in accord with Jesus’ admonition for his followers to be neutral as to politics. And I wanted to preach the good news of the Kingdom. (John 15:19) I appealed to the draft board to be classified as a minister.

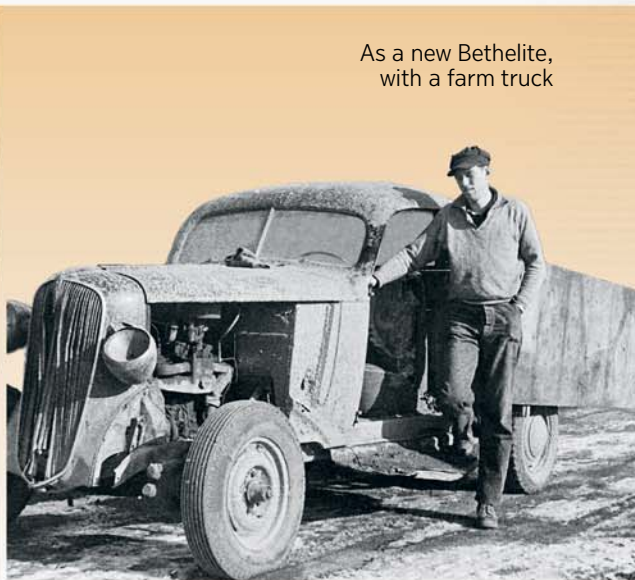
It touched me that Brother Miller volunteered to go with me to the draft board hearing. By nature, he was very outgoing and not easily intimidated. How it bolstered my confidence to have



Uncle Alfred  
and my father



Pioneering  
in 1952



As a new Bethelite,  
with a farm truck

at my side a spiritual man of his character! As a result of that hearing, in the late summer of 1954, the board recognized me as a minister. That opened the way for me to reach another theocratic goal.

About this time, I received an invitation to serve at Bethel, at what was then called Watchtower Farm, on Staten Island, New York. I was privileged to serve there for about three years. That led to many wonderful experiences because I met many wise ones and worked with them.

### BETHEL SERVICE

The farm on Staten Island included the radio station WBBR. That was operated by Jehovah's Witnesses from 1924 to 1957. Only 15 to 20 members of the Bethel family were assigned to the farm. Most of us were young and quite inexperienced. But with us was Eldon Woodworth, an older anointed brother. He truly proved to be a wise one. His fatherly interest in us was spiritually stabilizing. When on occasion the imperfections of others proved challenging, Brother Woodworth would say, "It sure is marvelous

what the Lord has done with what he has to work with."

We had the special privilege of having Brother Frederick W. Franz with us too. His wisdom and exceptional knowledge of the Scriptures were a positive influence on all of us, and he took a personal interest in each of us. Our cook was Harry Peterson; it was easier for us to use that last name than his real one, Papargyropoulos. He too was one of the anointed and had outstanding zeal for the ministry. Brother Peterson did his work at Bethel well but never neglected the field ministry. He would place hundreds of our magazines each month. He also had a wealth of Scriptural knowledge, answering many of our questions.

### BENEFITING FROM WISE SISTERS

The farm produce was processed at an on-site cannery. About 45,000 quarts (42,600 L) of fruits and vegetables a year were canned for the entire Bethel family. In this connection, I was privileged to serve with Etta Huth, a truly wise sister. She was responsible for the recipes that



Harry Peterson had outstanding zeal for the ministry

At WBBR with Brother Franz

With Angela and Etta Huth

With Angela in 1975,  
before a television interview



we used in our canning. During the canning season, local sisters came to assist, and Etta would help organize their work. Though Etta played a key role in the canning process, she was careful to set a fine example of respect for the brothers in oversight on the farm. I viewed her as a fine example of submission to theocratic headship.

Angela Romano was one of the young sisters who came to help with the canning. Etta had assisted her when she came into the truth. Thus, while serving at Bethel, I met another wise one, whom I have now walked with for 58 years. Angie and I were married in April 1958, and we have enjoyed many privileges of service together. Through the years, Angie's uncompromising loyalty to Jehovah has been a source of strength in our marriage. I can absolutely rely on her, no matter what challenges we face.

#### **A MISSIONARY ASSIGNMENT AND THE TRAVELING WORK**

When the WBBR facilities on Staten Island were sold in 1957, I served at Brooklyn Bethel for a short time. Then Angie and I married, so I left

Bethel, and for about three years, we pioneered on Staten Island. For a time, I even worked for the new owners of the radio station, which used the call letters WPOW.

Angie and I were determined to keep our life simple so that we could be ready to serve wherever we were needed. As a result, in early 1961 we were in a position to accept an assignment as special pioneers in Falls City, Nebraska. No sooner had we made that adjustment than we were invited to attend Kingdom Ministry School, at that time a one-month course of instruction at South Lansing, New York. We enjoyed the schooling and expected to use our training back in Nebraska. We were therefore surprised to receive a new assignment—as missionaries in Cambodia! This beautiful land in Southeast Asia exposed us to exotic sights, sounds, and aromas that were different from anything we had ever experienced. We eagerly wanted to spread the good news there.

However, the political situation changed, and we had to relocate to South Vietnam. Sadly, within two years I developed serious medical problems, so we were urged to return to our homeland. I needed some time to regain my strength, but once I did, we again took up the full-time service.

In March 1965 we were privileged to begin serving congregations in the traveling work. For 33 years, Angie and I enjoyed both circuit and district work, including a good deal of pre-convention and convention work. Conventions had always been a highlight for me, so it was delightful to help organize these events. For some years we were in the New York City area, and a number of the conventions were held at Yankee Stadium.

#### **RETURN TO BETHEL AND THEOCRATIC SCHOOLS**

As has been true for many in the special full-time ministry, exciting and challenging assignments awaited Angie and me. For example, in

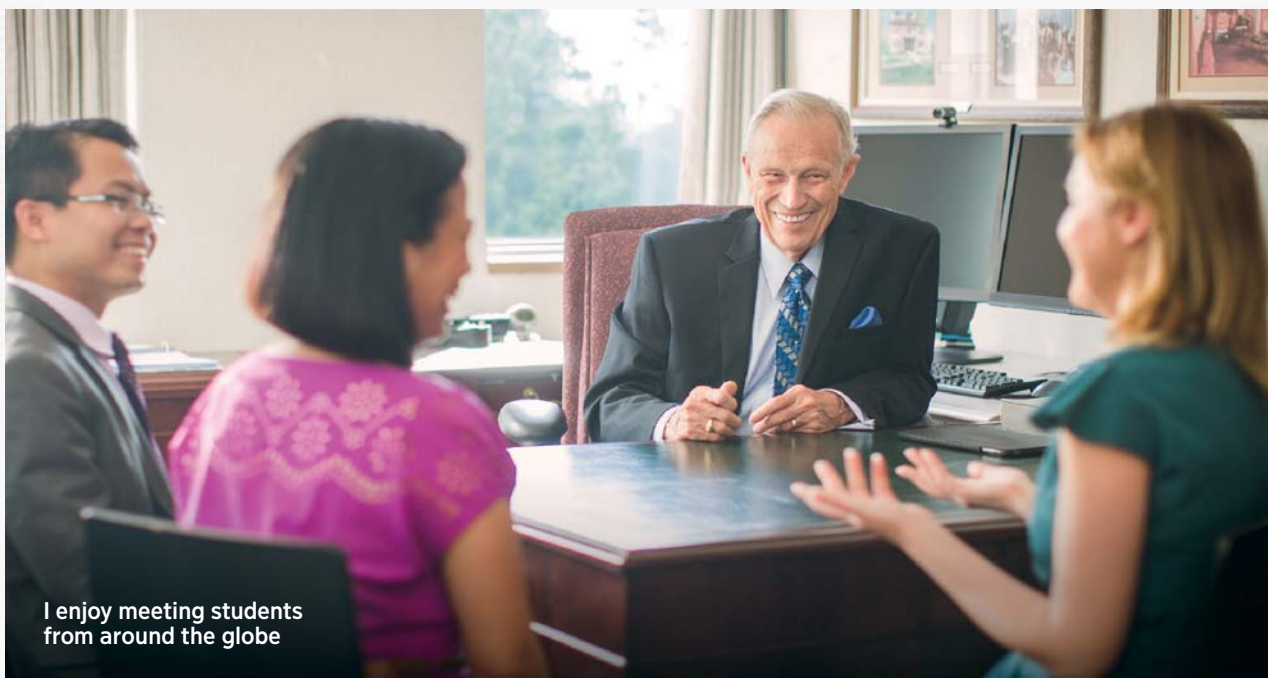


1995, I was asked to teach the Ministerial Training School. Three years later, we were invited to Bethel. It was a real joy to be back where I had started my special full-time service over 40 years earlier. For a time, I worked in the Service Department and as an instructor in a number of the schools. In 2007 the Governing Body placed the schools taught at Bethel under the new Theocratic Schools Department, and for some years I was privileged to be the overseer.

We have recently seen a number of significant adjustments in the field of theocratic education. The School for Congregation Elders was inaugurated in 2008. Over the next two years, more than 12,000 elders were taught at Patterson and at Brooklyn Bethel. That school is continuing at various other locations, with trained field instructors. In 2010 the Ministerial Training School was renamed the Bible School for Single Brothers, and a new school was formed, the Bible School for Christian Couples.

Starting in the 2015 service year, those two schools were combined, forming the School for Kingdom Evangelizers. Those being instructed could be couples or single brothers or sisters. Many around the globe were thrilled to hear that this school would be held in many branches. It is exciting to see the opportunities for theocratic education expand, and I am so grateful to have met many who make themselves available for this training.

Looking back on my life from before I got baptized in that watering trough until now, I thank Jehovah for the wise ones who assisted me in the way of the truth. They were not all of my age or from my cultural background. But inside, at heart, they were spiritual people. Their deep love for Jehovah was evident by their actions and attitudes. In his organization, we have many wise ones with whom we can walk. I have done so and have truly benefited.



I enjoy meeting students  
from around the globe



## Give Honor to Whom It Is Due

*“To the One sitting on the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever.”—REV. 5:13.*

SONGS: 10, 16

### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why do Jehovah and Christ deserve to be honored?

What humans are deserving of honor, and why?

What are some benefits of giving honor to those to whom it is due?

TO HONOR someone means to show him special attention as well as respect. Reasonably, we would expect that a person who is worthy of such attention and respect has done something to merit honor or that he serves in a special position. So we might well ask, Whom should we honor, and why is such honor merited?

<sup>2</sup> As Revelation 5:13 indicates, “the One sitting on the throne and . . . the Lamb” surely deserve to be honored. We note in chapter 4 of the same Bible book one reason why Jehovah deserves to be honored. Exalted creatures in the heavenly realm lift their voices in praise to Jehovah, “the One who lives forever and ever.” They declare: “You are worthy, Jehovah our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and be-

1. Why might some individuals deserve to be honored, and what will we now discuss?

2, 3. (a) Why is Jehovah especially worthy of honor? (See opening picture.) (b) At Revelation 5:13, who is the Lamb, and why is he worthy of honor?



cause of your will they came into existence and were created.”—Rev. 4:9-11.

<sup>3</sup> The Lamb is Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) The Bible tells us that he is far superior to all men who are or have been kings. It explains: “He is the King of those who rule as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords, the one alone having immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see.” (1 Tim. 6: 14-16) Indeed, what other king has ever voluntarily died as a ransom for our sins? Do you not feel moved to join with myriads of heavenly creatures in proclaiming: “The Lamb who was slaughtered is worthy to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.”—Rev. 5:12.

<sup>4</sup> Honoring Jehovah and Christ is not optional. Our everlasting life depends on our doing so. Jesus’ words that we read at John 5:22, 23 help us to see that plainly: “The Father judges no one at all, but he has entrusted all the judging to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.”—**Read Psalm 2:11, 12.**

<sup>5</sup> Humans were created “in God’s image.” (Gen. 1:27) Thus, most of them exhibit some godly qualities, though to differing degrees. Humans are capable of showing one another love, kindness, and compassion. Having been creat-

ed with a conscience, people normally have an inborn sense—albeit at times inaccurate or distorted—that alerts them to what is right or wrong, honest or dishonest, appropriate or inappropriate. (Rom. 2:14, 15) Most people are drawn to things that are clean and beautiful. Generally, they want to live with others in peace. Whether they realize it or not, they reflect to some extent Jehovah’s glory, and for this reason, they deserve a measure of honor and respect.—Ps. 8:5.

### PROPER BALANCE IN RENDERING OTHERS HONOR

<sup>6</sup> Balance is needed in determining what kind of honor should be rendered to other humans and to what extent. Most imperfect humans are strongly influenced by the spirit of Satan’s world. That is why people tend to *idolize* certain men or women rather than just show them appropriate honor and respect. They place religious and political leaders, sports figures, entertainment stars, and other celebrities on pedestals, often considering them to be almost superhuman. Hence, young and old alike look to them as role models, perhaps imitating their mannerisms, dress, or conduct.

<sup>7</sup> True Christians refrain from such a distorted view of honoring humans. Christ is the only human who ever lived whom we can consider a perfect role model. (1 Pet. 2:21) God would not be pleased if we extended to humans more honor than they are due. We need to bear in mind this basic truth: “All have

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4. Why is honoring Jehovah and Christ not optional?

5. Why should we show a measure of honor and respect to people in general?

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6, 7. In the matter of rendering humans honor, how do Jehovah’s Witnesses differ from many people?

sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) Truly, no human warrants the kind of honor that borders on idolatry.

<sup>8</sup> In the secular realm, some individuals serve in positions of authority. Government officials are expected to maintain law and order and to care for the needs of their citizens. This brings benefits to all. Accordingly, the apostle Paul advised Christians to view such human governmental authorities as “superior authorities” to whom Christians should be in subjection. He instructed them: “Render to all their dues: to the one who calls for the tax, the tax; . . . to the one who calls for honor, such honor.”—Rom. 13:1, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Fittingly, Jehovah’s Witnesses willingly render honor to public servants, even as it may be expected and as may be customary in the land. We cooperate with them as they perform their duties. Of course, our honor and support have reasonable, Scriptural limits. We cannot go to the point of disobeying God or violating our Christian neutrality.—**Read 1 Peter 2:13-17.**

<sup>10</sup> Jehovah’s servants in the past set the pattern in their relationship with governments and officials. When the Roman Empire called on people to participate in a census, Joseph and Mary complied. They traveled to Bethlehem despite the fact that Mary was soon to give birth to her first child. (Luke 2:1-5) Later, when Paul was accused of wrong-

doing, he respectfully defended himself and showed proper honor to King Herod Agrippa and to Festus, governor of the Roman province of Judea.—Acts 25:1-12; 26:1-3.

<sup>11</sup> However, Jehovah’s Witnesses refrain from treating religious leaders as ones who merit extraordinary honor, even though those leaders may expect it. False religion misrepresents God and distorts the teachings of his Word. Thus, we show religious leaders regard as fellow humans, but we do not show them special honor. We recall that Jesus denounced such men of his day as hypocrites and blind guides. (Matt. 23: 23, 24) In contrast, our showing government officials due respect and honor can at times have positive, even unexpected, results.

<sup>12</sup> Leopold Engleitner was a zealous Witness from Austria whom the Nazis arrested and sent by train to Buchenwald concentration camp. Dr. Heinrich Gleissner was a prisoner on the same train. He had been an Austrian politician. However, he was out of favor with the Nazis. On the trip to the camp, Brother Engleitner respectfully explained his beliefs to Gleissner, who listened carefully. After the second world war, Gleissner repeatedly used his influence to help the Witnesses in Austria. You may recall other examples of the good that can come about when Witnesses manifest appropriate respect for public officials, rendering them the honor that the Bible says Christians should give them.

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8, 9. (a) How do Jehovah’s Witnesses view government officials? (b) To what extent is it proper to support officials?

10. How did servants of Jehovah in the past set the pattern in their relationship with secular governments and officials?

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11, 12. (a) Why do we make a distinction between government officials and religious leaders? (b) What good resulted when an Austrian Witness showed a politician honor?

## OTHERS WHO MERIT HONOR

<sup>13</sup> Those related to us in the faith certainly merit honor and respect. This is especially true of the elders who are taking the lead. **(Read 1 Timothy 5:17.)** We honor these brothers regardless of their nationality, education, social standing, or financial status. The Bible refers to them as “gifts in men,” and they are a key part of God’s arrangement to care for the needs of his people. (Eph. 4: 8) Think of congregation elders, circuit overseers, Branch Committee members, and the members of the Governing Body. Our brothers and sisters in the first century had high regard for those appointed to take the lead, and we feel similarly today. We do not idolize well-known representatives of the Christian congregation or react in their presence as if angels were standing nearby. Still, we do respect and honor such brothers for their hard work and humility.—**Read 2 Corinthians 1:24; Revelation 19:10.**

<sup>14</sup> Such elders are recognized as humble spiritual shepherds. As evidence of

13. Who are especially worthy of being respected and honored, and why?

14, 15. Contrast genuine Christian shepherds with those who only claim to be such.

their humility, they refuse to let themselves be treated as celebrities. In this they differ from many modern-day religious leaders and from those of the first century about whom Jesus said: “They like the most prominent place at evening meals and the front seats in the synagogues and the greetings in the market-places.”—Matt. 23:6, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Genuine Christian shepherds humbly obey Jesus’ words: “Do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your Teacher, and all of you are brothers. Moreover, do not call anyone your father on earth, for one is your Father, the heavenly One. Neither be called leaders, for your Leader is one, the Christ. But the greatest one among you must be your minister. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” (Matt. 23:8-12) You can thus understand why elders in congregations around the globe earn their fellow Witnesses’ love, respect, and honor.

<sup>16</sup> Admittedly, it may take time for us to achieve proper balance in regard to how and to whom we render honor. This

16. Why should you continue to work to understand and apply what the Bible tells us about showing honor?



As they serve with humility, elders earn love, respect, and honor  
(See paragraphs 13-15)



was also true of the early Christians. (Acts 10:22-26; 3 John 9, 10) But it is definitely worth our effort to put into practice what the Bible indicates about rendering honor. Achieving proper balance brings many benefits.

### BENEFITS OF RENDERING PROPER HONOR

<sup>17</sup> As we respect and show honor to those who are in positions of secular authority, it is more likely that they will defend our right to preach without interference. Often, the result is that our activity is seen in a positive way. Several years ago, Birgit, a pioneer in Germany, attended her daughter's school graduation. The teachers told Birgit that it had been a pleasure to work with Witness children over the years. They said that it would be a shame if they had no Witness children in their school. Birgit explained, "Our children are taught to follow God's standards of conduct, and this includes showing respect for teachers and honoring them." One teacher said, "If all children were like yours, teaching would be like paradise." Several weeks later, one of the teachers attended a convention in Leipzig.

<sup>18</sup> Rendering proper honor to congregation elders is, of course, to be guided by the perfect and wise principles found in God's Word. **(Read Hebrews 13:7, 17.)** We can and should commend them for their hard work and strive to cooperate with directions that they provide. Our doing that may help them to continue carrying out their duties with joy. But

this does not mean that we try to copy a "prominent" elder in the exact way he dresses and grooms himself, his manner of public speaking, or even his style of conversation. Were we to do so, it could give the wrong impression. We should not forget that he too is an imperfect human. The model to follow and imitate is Christ.

<sup>19</sup> By giving the elders appropriate honor and respect while not treating them as celebrities, we are helping them. We make it easier for them to avoid falling victim to pride, to having any feelings of superiority or self-righteousness.

<sup>20</sup> On a more personal level, showing honor to those to whom it is due keeps us from becoming self-centered. It helps us to avoid having an inflated opinion of ourselves if some honor comes our way. It also keeps us in line with Jehovah's organization, which refrains from giving humans—whether believers or unbelievers—excessive or undue honor. Moreover, it is the course of wisdom, helping us to avoid being stumbled if some human to whom we showed honor disappoints us.

<sup>21</sup> The most important benefit of giving proper honor to those to whom it is due is that we thereby please God. We act as he wants us to and thus maintain integrity to him. That contributes to making a reply to any who would try to taunt him. (Prov. 27:11) The world is full of people whose sense of how to bestow honor is distorted. We are truly grateful to know how to give honor Jehovah's way.

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17. What are some benefits of showing honor to those in positions of authority?

18, 19. Why is rendering proper honor to elders a concern?

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20. How does rendering honor to others help us?

21. What is the most important benefit of giving proper honor to those to whom it is due?



## Exercise Faith Decide Wisely!

*“Keep asking in faith, not doubting at all.”—JAS. 1:6.*

CAIN had a choice, a decision to make: Get the mastery over his sinful emotions or let his emotions rule his actions. Whichever way he decided, there would be consequences that would affect the rest of his life. You know what Cain decided; he did not choose well. His decision and its resulting action cost his faithful brother Abel his life. And Cain’s decision affected his relationship with his Creator.—Gen. 4: 3-16.

<sup>2</sup> We too have choices and decisions to make. Not every one of our decisions is a life-and-death matter. However, many of our decisions, the choices we make, can have a profound effect on us. Hence, the ability to make good decisions can help us to live a relatively smooth, peaceful life rather than one that is full of chaos, controversy, and disappointment.—Prov. 14:8.

<sup>3</sup> What will help us to make wise decisions? We certainly

1. What affected Cain’s ability to make a wise decision, and with what result?
2. How important is our ability to choose wisely?
3. (a) To make wise decisions, we should have faith in what? (b) What questions will we consider?

**SONGS: 118, 35**

### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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Why should we accept that making decisions is part of life?

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Why should others not make decisions for us?

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Why might we sometimes have to change a decision already made?

need faith in God, not doubting his willingness and ability to help us to be wise. We also need faith in Jehovah's Word and in his way of doing things, trusting God's inspired counsel. **(Read James 1: 5-8.)** As we draw close to him and grow in love for his Word, we come to trust his judgment. Accordingly, we develop the habit of consulting God's Word before making decisions. But how can we improve our decision-making skills? And does being willing to decide mean sticking to our choices no matter what?

### LIFE REQUIRES MAKING DECISIONS

<sup>4</sup> From the start of human existence, men and women have had to make important decisions. Adam had to choose to listen either to his Creator or to Eve. He was willing to make a decision, but what do you think of the decision he made? His misled wife influenced him to make an extremely poor choice, one that cost him life in Paradise and eventually his very life. And that was just the beginning of the overall cost. We are still suffering the consequences of Adam's terrible decision.

<sup>5</sup> Some might think that life would be more pleasant if we did not have to make decisions. Do you feel that way? Remember, Jehovah did not create humans to be robots, incapable of thinking and making choices. The Bible actually teaches us how to make wise decisions. While Jehovah wants us to make decisions, this is not to our detriment. Reflect on some evidence of that.

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4. What choice did Adam have to make, and with what consequences?

5. How should we view the need to make decisions?

<sup>6</sup> Once settled in the Promised Land, the ancient Israelites had a very basic, vital choice: Worship Jehovah or serve some other god (or gods). **(Read Joshua 24:15.)** That might seem to have been a simple decision. Yet, their choice could come down to a matter of life or death. Repeatedly during the time of the Judges, the Israelites chose unwisely. They turned away from Jehovah and worshipped false gods. (Judg. 2:3, 11-23) Or think of an instance later in the history of God's people when they were obliged to make a decision. The prophet Elijah clearly outlined the choices: Serve Jehovah or serve the false god Baal. (1 Ki. 18:21) Elijah rebuked the people for being indecisive. You might think that this was a simple choice because it is always wise and beneficial to serve Jehovah. In fact, no reasonable person should be attracted to or attached to Baal. Still, those Israelites were "limping between two different opinions." Wisely, Elijah urged them to choose the superior way of worship—the worship of Jehovah.

<sup>7</sup> Why might it have been so difficult for those Israelites to make a wise decision? First, they had basically lost faith in Jehovah and refused to listen to his voice. They had not built a foundation of accurate knowledge or godly wisdom; nor did they trust in Jehovah. Acting in accord with accurate knowledge would have helped them to make wise decisions. (Ps. 25:12) Moreover, they had allowed others to influence them or even to make decisions for them. The people in the land who were not worship-

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6, 7. What choice did the ancient Israelites have, and why was it difficult for them to decide wisely? (See opening picture.)





Loving elders help others learn to make their own decisions  
(See paragraph 11)

pers of Jehovah influenced the Israelites' thinking, moving them to follow that pagan crowd. Jehovah had long before warned that such a thing could happen.—Ex. 23:2.

### SHOULD OTHERS MAKE DECISIONS FOR US?

<sup>8</sup> The above-mentioned examples convey to us a clear lesson. It is up to each of us to make decisions, and the wise, right choices are based on sound Scriptural knowledge. Galatians 6:5 reminds us: “Each one will carry his own load of responsibility.” (Ftn.) We should not give someone else the responsibility to make decisions for us. Rather, we should personally learn what is right in God’s eyes and choose to do it.

<sup>9</sup> How might we give in to the danger of letting others choose for us? Peer pressure could sway us to make a bad decision. (Prov. 1:10, 15) Still, no matter

how others try to pressure us, it is our responsibility to follow our Bible-trained conscience. In many respects, if we let others make our decisions, we are essentially deciding to “follow them.” It is still a choice, but a potentially disastrous one.

<sup>10</sup> The apostle Paul clearly alerted the Galatians to the danger of letting others make personal decisions for them. **(Read Galatians 4:17.)** Some in the congregation wanted to make personal choices for others in order to alienate them from the apostles. Why? Those selfish ones were seeking prominence. They overstepped proper bounds and did not respect their fellow Christians’ responsibility to make their own decisions.

<sup>11</sup> Paul set a fine example of respecting his brothers’ right of free will to make decisions. **(Read 2 Corinthians 1:24.)**

8. What important lesson about decision-making do we learn from Israel’s history?

9. Why can it be dangerous to let others decide for us?

10. Of what did Paul have to warn the Galatians?

11. How can we help others as they make personal decisions?

Today, when giving counsel on matters involving personal choice, the elders should follow that pattern. They are happy to share Bible-based information with others in the flock. Still, the elders are careful to allow individual brothers and sisters to make their own decisions. That is logical because those individuals will bear the responsibility for the results. Here is an important lesson: We can show helpful interest in others and call attention to Scriptural principles or counsel. Still, others have a right and responsibility to make their own decisions. When they do this wisely, they benefit. Clearly, we should avoid any tendency to think that we are authorized to make decisions for other brothers and sisters.

### MAKING DECISIONS WHEN EMOTIONS RULE

<sup>12</sup> A popular philosophy or common adage is: Follow your heart. But doing that can be dangerous. And in a sense, doing so is unscriptural. The Bible warns us not to let our imperfect heart or mere sentiment rule when we are making decisions. (Prov. 28:26) And Bible accounts show the sad consequences of following one's heart. The core problem is that in imperfect humans, "the heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate." (Jer. 3:17; 13:10; 17:9; 1 Ki. 11:9) So, what could it mean for us if we simply follow our heart?

<sup>13</sup> A Christian's heart is important, for we are commanded to love Jehovah with our whole heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:37-39) But the Scriptural passages cit-

ed in the preceding paragraph highlight the danger of letting emotions dictate our thinking and actions. For example, what might happen if we make decisions when we are angry? The answer may be obvious if we have done this in times past. (Prov. 14:17; 29:22) Or is it likely that we will make sound decisions when we are discouraged? (Num. 32:6-12; Prov. 24:10) Bear in mind that God's Word shows the wisdom of being "a slave to God's law." (Rom. 7:25) Clearly, we could easily be deceived by our emotions if we allow them to prevail when we are making important decisions.

### WHEN TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

<sup>14</sup> We need to make wise decisions. However, that does not mean that we should refuse to change a decision once we have made it. There are times when we will do well to reconsider a decision and perhaps change it. Note Jehovah's example with regard to the Ninevites in Jonah's day. "When the true God saw what they did, how they had turned back from their evil ways, he reconsidered the calamity that he said he would bring on them, and he did not bring it." (Jonah 3:10) After observing the Ninevites' repentant, changed attitude, Jehovah adjusted his decision. In doing so, he manifested reasonableness, humility, and compassion. Furthermore, God does not determine his course of action based on a momentary flare-up of anger, the type of emotional outburst that many humans display.

<sup>15</sup> There may be occasions when it

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12, 13. Why is it dangerous simply to follow our heart if we are angry or discouraged?

14. How do we know that changing one's decisions might be appropriate?

15. What might lead us to change a decision?

would be good for us to reconsider a choice or decision. It could be when the prevailing circumstances change. Jehovah altered his decision at times when circumstances changed. (1 Ki. 21:20, 21, 27-29; 2 Ki. 20:1-5) Or new information may provide us with a valid reason to adjust a decision. King David was given faulty information about Saul's grandson Mephibosheth. When David later received accurate information, he amended his decision. (2 Sam. 16:3, 4; 19:24-29) At times, it may be wise for us to do similarly.

<sup>16</sup> God's Word counsels us not to be hasty when we need to make an important decision. (Prov. 21:5) When we take the time to weigh carefully all the aspects or facts related to a decision, we will likely be more successful. (1 Thess. 5:21) Before determining a course of action, a family head ought to take the time to research the Scriptures and Christian publications, as well as to consider the opinions or views of others in his family. Recall that God urged Abraham to listen to what his wife had to say. (Gen. 21:9-12) Elders too should take time to do research. And if they are reasonable, modest men, they will not fear losing respect if new, relevant information comes to their attention that indicates a need to reconsider what they had already decided. They should be ready to adjust their thinking and decisions when appropriate, and all of us do well to follow that example. This can promote peace and order in the congregation.—Acts 6:1-4.

16. (a) What are some helpful guidelines for making wise decisions? (b) Why and how should we view past decisions?

## FOLLOW THROUGH WITH DECISIONS

<sup>17</sup> Some decisions are weightier than others. The weightier ones call for more thought and prayerful consideration, which may take time. Some Christians face decisions about whether to marry and whom to marry. Another serious decision that holds the potential for many blessings is how and when to enter the full-time ministry. In such areas, it is important to have full trust that Jehovah can and does provide wise guidance. (Prov. 1:5) Thus, it is vital to draw on the Bible as the best source of advice and to seek Jehovah's guidance in prayer. And bear in mind that Jehovah can give us the qualities we need to make decisions that are in harmony with his will. When facing important decisions, make it a practice to ask: 'Will this decision give evidence of my love for Jehovah? Will it bring joy and peace to my family? And will it show that I am patient and kind?'

<sup>18</sup> Jehovah does not coerce us into loving him and serving him. That is our choice. In line with the free will that he grants us, he respects our responsibility and right to 'choose for ourselves' whether we will serve him. (Josh. 24:15; Eccl. 5:4) But he expects us to follow through on other decisions that we make based on his guidance. With faith in Jehovah's way of doing things and the principles that he has kindly provided, we can make wise decisions and prove ourselves steady in all our ways.—Jas. 1:5-8; 4:8.

17. How can we be more successful in making decisions?

18. Why does Jehovah expect us to make our own decisions?





ASA



JEHOSHAPHAT



HEZEKIAH



IOSIAH

## Serve Jehovah With a Complete Heart!

*“O Jehovah, remember, please, how I have walked before you faithfully and with a complete heart.”—2 KI. 20:3.*

SONGS: 36, 54

### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What does it mean to serve Jehovah with a complete heart?

What impressed you about God's approval of the four kings of Judah?

Which of the four kings would you like to imitate, and why?

BEING imperfect, we are prone to make mistakes. Thankfully, though, Jehovah does not deal with us “according to our sins,” provided that we are repentant and in faith approach him humbly on the basis of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. (Ps. 103: 10) Yet, as David told Solomon, for our daily worship to be acceptable to Jehovah, we have to “serve him with a complete heart.” (1 Chron. 28:9) How can we as imperfect humans do so?

<sup>2</sup> To aid us in this respect, we can compare the life of King Asa with that of King Amaziah. Both Judean kings did what was right in the eyes of Jehovah, but Asa did so with a complete heart. (2 Chron. 15:16, 17; 25:1, 2; Prov. 17:3) Both kings were imperfect and made mistakes. Yet, Asa basically did not deviate from God’s ways, for his heart was “completely devoted” to God. (1 Chron. 28:9, ftn.) Amaziah, on the other hand, was not fully devoted to Jehovah. After gaining the victory over God’s enemies, he brought back

1-3. What is involved in serving Jehovah with “a complete heart”? Illustrate.

their gods and began worshipping them.—2 Chron. 25:11-16.

<sup>3</sup> Serving God with “a complete heart” involves full devotion that does not end. In the Bible, the word “heart” usually refers to a man’s inner self. It encompasses his desires, thinking, disposition, attitudes, abilities, motivations, and goals. So a person who serves Jehovah with his whole heart does not render hypocritical service. He does not just go through the motions of worshipping Jehovah. What about us? Well, if we, though being imperfect humans, continue to be fully devoted to God without hypocrisy, we will be serving God with a complete heart.—2 Chron. 19:9.

<sup>4</sup> To appreciate what it means to serve God with a complete heart, let us consider the life of Asa as well as that of some other kings of Judah who served God with heartfelt devotion—Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. All four of them made mistakes, but they still gained Jehovah’s approval. Why did God view them as having served him with a complete heart, and how can we imitate them?

### ASA’S HEART “WAS COMPLETE WITH JEHOVAH”

<sup>5</sup> Asa was the third king of Judah after the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel separated. He rid his domain of idolatry and expelled the male temple prostitutes. He even removed his grandmother Maacah from the position of “queen mother, because she had made an obscene idol.” (1 Ki. 15:11-13)

4. What will we now consider?

5. What decisive actions did Asa take?

Furthermore, Asa urged his people “to search for Jehovah . . . and to observe the Law and the commandment.” Yes, he promoted true worship.—2 Chron. 14:4.

<sup>6</sup> Jehovah blessed Judah with peace for the first ten years of Asa’s reign. Then Zerah the Ethiopian came against Judah with 1,000,000 men and 300 chariots. (2 Chron. 14:1, 6, 9, 10) How did Asa react to this crisis? He expressed full confidence in Jehovah. **(Read 2 Chronicles 14:11.)** In answer to Asa’s heartfelt prayer, God gave Asa a complete victory, annihilating the Ethiopian army. (2 Chron. 14:12, 13) Even when kings were not faithful to him, Jehovah could give them victory over the enemy for the sake of his own name. (1 Ki. 20:13, 26-30) Asa, however, relied on God, and Jehovah answered his prayer. Granted, on later occasions, Asa acted unwisely. For example, he sought help from the king of Syria rather than from Jehovah. (1 Ki. 15:16-22) Still, God’s overall assessment was that Asa’s heart “was complete with Jehovah all his life.” How can we imitate Asa in doing good?—1 Ki. 15:14.

<sup>7</sup> Each of us can examine his heart to see if it is fully devoted to God. Ask yourself, ‘Am I determined to please Jehovah, to defend true worship, and to protect his people from any corrupting influence?’ Think how much courage Asa had to muster to stand up to Maacah, who was “queen mother” in the land! You probably do not know anyone

6. How did Asa react when the Ethiopians invaded the land?

7, 8. How can you imitate Asa in serving Jehovah?

who acts just like her, but there may be a situation in which you can imitate Asa's zeal. For example, what if a member of your family or a close friend sins, is unrepentant, and has to be disfellowshipped? Would you take decisive action by ceasing to associate with that person? What would your heart move you to do?

<sup>8</sup> Like Asa, you can show that you have a complete heart by fully relying on God when you are faced with opposition, even some that may seem insurmountable. You may be teased or ridiculed at school for taking a stand as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Or colleagues at work may taunt you for taking days off for spiritual activities or for not often working overtime. In such situations, pray to God, just as Asa did. Courageously rely on Jehovah, remaining firm for what you know is right and wise. Remember that God strengthened and helped Asa, and He will strengthen you.

<sup>9</sup> God's servants go beyond simply thinking about themselves. Asa promoted true worship. We likewise help others "to search for Jehovah." How pleased Jehovah must be when he sees that we speak to our neighbors and others about him, doing so out of genuine love for him and genuine interest in the everlasting welfare of people!

#### JEHOSHAPHAT SEARCHED FOR JEHOVAH

<sup>10</sup> Asa's son Jehoshaphat "kept walking in the way of his father Asa."

9. When preaching, how can we show that we have a complete heart?

10, 11. How can you follow the course of Jehoshaphat?

(2 Chron. 20:31, 32) How so? Like his father, Jehoshaphat encouraged the people to search for Jehovah. He did so by organizing a teaching campaign that used "the book of Jehovah's Law." (2 Chron. 17:7-10) He even went to the territory of the northern kingdom of Israel, to the mountainous region of Ephraim, "to bring them back to Jehovah." (2 Chron. 19:4) Jehoshaphat was a king "who searched for Jehovah with all his heart."—2 Chron. 22:9.

<sup>11</sup> We can all have a share in the great teaching campaign that Jehovah is having done today. Is it your goal each month to teach the Word of God to others, trying to move their heart to serve God? By your extending yourself and with God's blessing, you may be able to start a Bible study. Is that a goal that you pray about? Are you willing to accept this challenge, even giving up some of what is commonly viewed as free time? And just as Jehoshaphat went to the territory of Ephraim to help people return to true worship, we can reach out to those who have become inactive. In addition, the congregation elders arrange to visit and offer help to disfellowshipped ones in the congregation territory who may have left their past practice of sin.

<sup>12</sup> Like his father, Asa, Jehoshaphat maintained his devotion to God even when threatened by an overwhelming enemy force. **(Read 2 Chronicles 20:2-4.)** Jehoshaphat did become afraid! Yet, "he resolved to search for Jehovah." In prayer, he humbly admitted

12, 13. (a) When facing a frightening situation, how did Jehoshaphat react? (b) Why should we imitate Jehoshaphat in acknowledging our weaknesses?



that his people were “powerless before this large crowd” and that he and his people did not know what to do. He fully relied on Jehovah, saying: “Our eyes are toward you.”—2 Chron. 20:12.

<sup>13</sup> Sometimes we, like Jehoshaphat, may not know what to do, even being afraid. (2 Cor. 4:8, 9) But remember that Jehoshaphat acknowledged in a public prayer how weak he and his people felt. (2 Chron. 20:5) Those who take the spiritual lead in the family can imitate Jehoshaphat by turning to Jehovah for guidance and strength to cope with the problem they face. Do not feel ashamed to let your family hear such supplications. They will sense your trust in Jehovah. God helped Jehoshaphat, and he will also help you.

#### HEZEKIAH KEPT DOING WHAT WAS RIGHT

<sup>14</sup> To become known as a king who “held fast to Jehovah,” Hezekiah, unlike Jehoshaphat, had to overcome the bad influence of an idolatrous father. Hezekiah “removed the high places, smashed the sacred pillars, and cut down the sacred pole. He also crushed the copper serpent that Moses had made,” which by then had been misused for idolatrous purposes. He was fully devoted to Jehovah, for “he *continued* to keep the commandments that Jehovah had given to Moses.”—2 Ki. 18:1-6.

<sup>15</sup> Even when Assyria, the world power at that time, invaded Judah and threatened to annihilate Jerusalem, Hezekiah wholeheartedly relied on Jehovah. The Assyrian King Sennacherib

taunted Jehovah and tried to intimidate Hezekiah into surrendering. However, in prayer Hezekiah expressed full trust in Jehovah’s saving power. **(Read Isaiah 37:15-20.)** God answered his prayer by sending an angel to strike down 185,000 Assyrians.—Isa. 37:36, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Hezekiah later became sick to the point of dying. He begged Jehovah to remember how he had walked before Him. **(Read 2 Kings 20:1-3.)** We know from the Scriptures that we are not living at a time when we can look to God for miraculous healings or an extension of our life. Still, as did Hezekiah, each of us can say to Jehovah in prayer: “I have walked before you faithfully and with a complete heart.” Do you believe that Jehovah is capable and willing to sustain you even on a sickbed?—Ps. 41:3.

<sup>17</sup> Meditating on the example of Hezekiah, we may see a need to remove something that is hindering our relationship with God or diverting our attention from true worship. Clearly, we do not want to imitate those in the world who, using social media, treat humans as if they were idols. Of course, some Christians may find pleasure in communicating with family or close friends by such means. But many in the world use social media excessively, following men or women whom they do not even know. Or they spend a great deal of time looking at pictures of or reading about such individuals. There is the danger of becoming consumed with what amounts to trivia. A Christian could even become puffed up with pride

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14, 15. How did Hezekiah show complete reliance on God?

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16, 17. How can you imitate Hezekiah as you serve God?

over how many like his postings, even taking offense if they cease to follow him. Can we imagine the apostle Paul or Aquila and Priscilla occupying themselves each day posting images or following someone outside of the brotherhood? We read that Paul was “intensely occupied with the word.” And Priscilla and Aquila used their time to explain “the way of God more accurately” to others. (Acts 18:4, 5, 26) We can ask ourselves, ‘Do I avoid idolizing humans or using a great deal of valuable time on inconsequential matters?’—**Read Ephesians 5:15, 16.**

#### **JOSIAH KEPT JEHOVAH'S COMMANDMENTS**

<sup>18</sup> King Josiah, Hezekiah's great-grandson, also resolutely kept Jehovah's commandments “with all his heart.” (2 Chron. 34:31) When he was still a teenager, “he started to search for the God of David,” and by the time he was 20, he began to cleanse Judah of idolatry. (**Read 2 Chronicles 34:1-3.**) Josiah was zealous in doing what pleased God, far more so than many kings of Judah. Still, when what may have been the original writings of the Mosaic Law were found and read to Josiah, he saw the need to do God's will more fully. He urged others to serve Jehovah. As a result, the people “did not deviate from following Jehovah” throughout Josiah's lifetime.—2 Chron. 34:27, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Like Josiah, young ones should start to seek Jehovah from an early age. Repentant King Manasseh may have taught Josiah about God's mercy.

18, 19. In what ways would you like to be like Josiah?

Young ones, draw close to faithful older ones in your family and in the congregation and learn how good Jehovah has been to them. Also, remember that the reading of the Scriptures touched Josiah's heart and moved him to take action. Your reading of the Word of God may move you to take action that will increase your happiness and strengthen your friendship with God as well as spur you on to help others to search for God. (**Read 2 Chronicles 34:18, 19.**) A study of the Bible may also help you to notice ways that you can improve in your service to God. If you do, apply yourself, just as Josiah did.

#### **SERVE JEHOVAH WITH A COMPLETE HEART!**

<sup>20</sup> Do you see the benefit of reviewing how the four kings of Judah whom we have considered served Jehovah with a complete heart? They were zealous in doing God's will and were fully devoted to accomplishing it. They kept doing God's will. They even did so when they faced formidable foes. Most important, their motive for serving Jehovah was pure.

<sup>21</sup> As we will see in the next article, the four kings whom we have considered all made mistakes. Yet, when the Examiner of the heart scrutinized them, he saw that their heart was complete toward him. We too are imperfect. As Jehovah examines us, does he conclude that we are serving him with a complete heart? Let us address that matter in the following article.

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20, 21. (a) What do the four kings we considered have in common? (b) What will we discuss in the next article?



## Will You Apply Your Heart to the Things Written?

*“These things . . . were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have come.”—1 COR. 10:11.*

IF YOU saw someone slip and fall on a path, would you not be careful when walking on that same pathway? By considering the mistakes of others, we may be helped to avoid making the same errors. This is also true of our spiritual course. We can learn valuable lessons from the mistakes of others, including those recorded in the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> The four Judean kings who were considered in the preceding article served Jehovah with a complete heart. Still, they made some serious mistakes. What can we learn from their experiences, and how can we avoid a similar course? Meditating on these examples can help us to benefit from the things that were written beforehand for our instruction.—**Read Romans 15:4.**

### RELYING ON HUMAN WISDOM LEADS TO DISASTER

<sup>3</sup> Let us first consider Asa and see how God’s Word can influence our life. Asa relied on Jehovah when a million

1, 2. Why will we consider the examples of four kings of Judah?

3-5. (a) Though Asa’s heart was complete toward Jehovah, what problem did he face? (b) Why might Asa have relied on humans when Baasha came up against Judah?

SONGS: 49, 127

### WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM THE MISTAKES OF THE FOLLOWING KINGS?

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Asa and Jehoshaphat

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Hezekiah

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Josiah

Ethiopians came against Judah; yet, he failed to do so when Baasha the king of Israel began to fortify Ramah, a city bordering Asa's domain. (2 Chron. 16:1-3) In the latter case, Asa relied on his own wisdom and bribed King Ben-hadad of Syria to attack Baasha. Did Asa's tactic succeed? "When Baasha heard of it," the Bible reports, "he immediately quit building Ramah and abandoned his work on it." (2 Chron. 16:5) So Asa's strategy worked—at first glance!

<sup>4</sup> How, though, did Jehovah view Asa's course? God sent his spokesman Hanani to reprimand Asa for not relying on Jehovah. (**Read 2 Chronicles 16:7-9.**) "From now on," Hanani said, "there will be wars against you." Baasha was turned away; however, Asa and his people experienced wars for the rest of his reign.

<sup>5</sup> As we noted in the preceding article, God examined Asa's heart and judged it to be complete with Him. (1 Ki. 15:14) In God's eyes, Asa's devotion was basically sound, satisfying divine requirements. Still, he had to reap the consequences of his unwise course. In dealing with Baasha, what led Asa to rely on humans—Ben-hadad and himself—instead of Jehovah? Could he have thought that diplomacy or militaristic maneuvering would deliver a more favorable outcome than would turning to God for help? Could he have given in to such reasoning as a result of receiving bad counsel?

<sup>6</sup> Will the account about Asa move us to examine our own course of action? When we face problems that seem too much for us to deal with, it may be easy to see the need to rely on Jehovah. But what do we do when we have to cope

with smaller issues of daily life? Do we resort to human thinking by trying to solve them in our own way? Or do we look for Bible principles and try to apply them, thus showing that we rely on Jehovah's way to solve problems? For example, on occasion you may face some opposition from your family regarding attending meetings or an assembly. You ask Jehovah to direct you and help you discern the best way to handle the situation. Or what if you lose your job, and you are having difficulty finding another? When speaking with a prospective employer, would you still inform him that you will be attending weekday meetings regularly? Whatever the problem may be, we do well to heed the words of the psalmist who said: "Commit your way to Jehovah; rely on him, and he will act in your behalf."—Ps. 37:5.

#### WHAT CAN BAD ASSOCIATIONS DO TO YOU?

<sup>7</sup> What about Asa's son Jehoshaphat? He had many desirable qualities. By relying on God, Jehoshaphat did much good. Yet, he also made unwise decisions. For example, he formed a marriage alliance with wicked King Ahab of the northern kingdom. And despite a warning from the prophet Micaiah, Jehoshaphat joined Ahab in fighting against the Syrians. In the battle, Jehoshaphat narrowly avoided being killed. Then he returned to Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 18:1-32) At that, the prophet Jehu asked him: "Is it the wicked you should be helping, and is it those who hate Jehovah you should love?"—**Read 2 Chronicles 19:1-3.**

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6. What can we learn from Asa's mistake? Illustrate.

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7, 8. Jehoshaphat made what mistakes, and with what results? (See opening picture.)



<sup>8</sup> Did Jehoshaphat learn from that experience? While he did continue to show zeal in wanting to please God, it seems that he did not learn from the experience with Ahab and from Jehu's warning words. Jehoshaphat forged another unwise alliance. It was with an enemy of God, this time with the son of Ahab, wicked King Ahaziah. Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah built ships together, which ended up being wrecked, not accomplishing the purpose for which they were built. —2 Chron. 20:35-37.

<sup>9</sup> Reading the accounts of Jehoshaphat ought to move us to examine our own life. How so? Well, overall Jehoshaphat was a good king. He did what was right and “searched for Jehovah with all his heart.” (2 Chron. 22:9) Still, he was not immune to the effect of bad associations. Recall this inspired proverb: “The one walking with the wise will become wise, but the one who has dealings with the stupid will fare badly.”

9. How can bad association affect our whole life?

(Prov. 13:20) On the one hand, we may be trying to help interested ones into the truth. Yet, Jehoshaphat's unnecessary dealings with Ahab almost cost him his life. Similarly, our having unnecessary association with those who do not serve Jehovah involves risks.

<sup>10</sup> What practical lesson can we draw from the experience of Jehoshaphat? A Christian may begin to have romantic feelings for someone who does not love Jehovah, thinking that a suitable mate cannot be found among true Christians. Or a Christian may feel pressure from unbelieving relatives to get married ‘before it is too late.’ Furthermore, some may feel like one sister, who said: “We are hardwired to want love and companionship.” What is a Christian to do? Meditating on what happened to Jehoshaphat can help. He usually looked to God for direction. (2 Chron. 18:4-6)

10. (a) What lesson about getting married can we learn from Jehoshaphat? (b) What should we bear in mind when faced with the problem of bad associations?

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Be aware of the danger  
of becoming unevenly  
yoked with an unbeliever  
(See paragraph 10)



But what happened when Jehoshaphat associated with Ahab, who had no love for Jehovah? Jehoshaphat should have borne in mind that Jehovah's eyes look for those whose heart is complete toward him. In our time too, God's eyes are "roving about through all the earth," and he is ready "to show his strength" in our behalf. (2 Chron. 16:9) He understands our situation and loves us. Do you have faith that God will fill your needs for love and companionship in a satisfying way? Be sure that at some point, he will do so!

### DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BECOME HAUGHTY

<sup>11</sup> The lesson we can learn from Hezekiah involves the heart. On one occasion, the Examiner of hearts exposed what was in Hezekiah's heart. (**Read 2 Chronicles 32:31.**) When Hezekiah became very sick, God gave him a sign indicating that he would recover—a shadow moving backward. Apparently, the princes of Babylon sent emissaries to inquire about that sign. (2 Ki. 20:8-13; 2 Chron. 32:24) Revealing what was in his heart when "left . . . alone," Hezekiah showed those Babylonians "his entire treasure-house." This foolish act exposed "all that was in [Hezekiah's] heart."

<sup>12</sup> The Bible does not tell us just what caused Hezekiah's heart to become haughty. Might it have been his victory against the Assyrians or his being cured by God miraculously? Could it have been because of his "vast riches and glory"? In any case, because Hezeki-

ah was haughty, he "did not respond appreciatively to the good done to him." How sad! Though he could plead with God that he had served Him with a complete heart, Hezekiah did for a time displease Jehovah. Later, though, "Hezekiah humbled himself," so he and his people were spared God's indignation. —2 Chron. 32:25-27; Ps. 138:6.

<sup>13</sup> How can we benefit from reading the account of Hezekiah and meditating on it? Remember that Hezekiah's haughtiness became obvious soon after Jehovah defeated Sennacherib and cured Hezekiah's deadly sickness. In our case, if we have accomplished something worthwhile, could it be that Jehovah is 'leaving us alone to put us to the test,' allowing what is in our heart to surface? For example, a brother may have worked hard to prepare a talk and give it before a large audience. Many praise him for what he has done. How will he react to the praise?

<sup>14</sup> When praised, we do well to apply Jesus' words: "When you have done all the things assigned to you, say: 'We are good-for-nothing slaves. What we have done is what we ought to have done.'" (Luke 17:10) Here again, we can learn from Hezekiah's experience. A haughty attitude surfaced in that he "did not respond appreciatively to the good done to him." Our meditating on how much God has done for us will help us to avoid an attitude that Jehovah hates. We can speak appreciatively of Jehovah. He has provided both the Holy Scriptures and the holy spirit that supports his people.

11, 12. (a) How did Hezekiah reveal what was in his heart? (b) Why was Hezekiah spared from God's indignation?

13, 14. (a) When might Jehovah 'leave us alone to put us to the test'? (b) How can we deal with praise we receive for what we have accomplished?

## TAKE CARE WHEN MAKING DECISIONS

<sup>15</sup> Finally, what warning can we find in what happened to good King Josiah? Consider what led to his defeat and death. (**Read 2 Chronicles 35:20-22.**) Josiah “went out against” King Necho of Egypt, although that king told Josiah that he had no dispute with him. The Bible says that Necho’s words were “from the mouth of God.” Why, then, did Josiah go out to fight? The Bible does not say.

<sup>16</sup> How, though, would Josiah know that Necho’s words were from Jehovah? Well, he could have asked Jeremiah, one of the faithful prophets. (2 Chron. 35:23, 25) But there is no record of his doing so. Also, Necho was heading to Carchemish to war “against another house,” not to war against Jerusalem. Moreover, God’s name was not involved, for Necho was taunting neither Jehovah nor his people. So it was bad judgment on Josiah’s part to battle against Necho. Can we see in this a lesson that we can apply? When faced with a problem, we do well to consider what Jehovah’s will may be in the matter.

<sup>17</sup> If a problem arises, we ought to consider what Bible principles are involved and apply them in a balanced way. In some cases, we may want to consult with the elders. We may have given thought to what we already know about the subject, and we may even have done research in our publications. Yet, there may be other Bible principles to take into consider-

ation, which an elder might help us to analyze. For example, a sister knows that she has the responsibility to preach the good news. (Acts 4:20) However, suppose she plans to go out in the field service on a certain day, but her unbelieving husband wants her to stay home. He says that they have not had much time together lately, and he would like them to do something as a couple. She might consider relevant Bible texts, such as obeying God and the command to make disciples. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 5:29) But she also needs to think about wifely subjection and being reasonable. (Eph. 5:22-24; Phil. 4:5) Is her husband completely opposed to her going out in service, or is he asking her to do something else just that one day? We need balance as we seek to do God’s will and strive to have a good conscience.

## MAINTAIN A COMPLETE HEART AND REJOICE

<sup>18</sup> Being imperfect, we too may at times be inclined to make any one of the mistakes committed by the four kings discussed above. We might (1) unwittingly rely on human wisdom, (2) turn to bad associations, (3) become haughty, or (4) make decisions without first considering what God’s will is. How kind of Jehovah to see good in us, as he saw good in those four kings! Jehovah also sees how much we love him and how much we long to serve him fully. So he has provided us with warning examples to help us avoid making serious mistakes. Let us meditate on these Bible accounts and be thankful that Jehovah has provided them for us!

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15, 16. Why did Josiah lose God’s protection and his life?

17. When we encounter a problem, how can we avoid making a mistake like the one Josiah made?

18. How can you benefit from considering the accounts of the four kings as set out in this article?

# BEING A FRIEND

## When Friendship Is in Danger

Gianni and Maurizio have been friends for some 50 years. There was a time, however, when their friendship was in jeopardy. “During a difficult time, I made some serious mistakes that caused us to drift apart,” Maurizio explains. Gianni adds: “Maurizio was my Bible teacher when I started studying. He had become a spiritual mentor to me. So, what he did seemed unreal. It was as if my whole world were falling apart because I knew that we would go our separate ways. I felt abandoned.”

GOOD friends are precious, and a lasting friendship does not happen just by chance. If a friendship is threatened, what can help to save it? We can learn a lot from some individuals mentioned in the Bible who were real friends but whose friendship was later in danger.

### WHEN A FRIEND MAKES A MISTAKE

David, the shepherd and king, certainly had good friends. Jonathan is one of those friends who may come to mind. (1 Sam. 18:1) But David had other friends, such as



the prophet Nathan. The Bible does not specify when their friendship began. Yet, at one point David confided in Nathan as you might confide in a friend. David desired to build a house for Jehovah. The king must have valued Nathan's opinion as a friend and as a man who had Jehovah's spirit. —2 Sam. 7:2, 3.

However, something occurred that threatened their friendship. King David committed adultery with Bath-sheba, and afterward he had her husband, Uriah, killed. (2 Sam. 11:2-21) For many years, Da-



vid had been loyal to Jehovah and upheld justice. But then he committed this terrible sin! What had happened to that good king? Could he not see the seriousness of his conduct? Did he think that he could hide it from God?

What would Nathan do? Would he let someone else bring up the matter to the king? Others were aware of how David had arranged to have Uriah killed. So why would Nathan get involved and risk spoiling their long-standing friendship? It could even endanger Nathan's life if he spoke up. After all, David already had innocent Uriah killed.

But Nathan was a spokesman for God. The prophet knew that if he remained silent, his relationship with David would not be the same and his own conscience would suffer. His friend David had taken a path that had Jehovah's disapproval. The king desperately needed help to get back on track. Yes, David needed a real friend. Nathan was such a friend. He chose to broach the subject with an illustration that could touch the heart of the former shepherd. Nathan delivered God's message but in a way that helped David grasp the gravity of his errors and moved him to take action.—2 Sam. 12:1-14.

What would you do if you had a friend who made a significant mistake or committed a serious sin? You might be tempted to reason that pointing out his wrong would damage your friendship. Or you might feel that reporting his sinful conduct to the elders, who could help him spiritually, would be a betrayal of your friendship. What would you do?

Gianni, mentioned earlier, recalls: "I realized that something had changed. Maurizio was not as open with me as before. I de-

cided to approach him, although it was extremely difficult for me to do so. I wondered: 'What can I tell him that he does not already know? His reaction might be terrible!' But remembering all that we had studied together, I found the strength to talk to him. Maurizio had done so with me when I needed help. I did not want to lose his friendship, but I wanted to help him because I cared about him."

Maurizio adds: "Gianni was sincere—and he was right. I knew that the consequences of my bad choices were not his fault and not Jehovah's fault. So I accepted the discipline, and in time I recovered spiritually."

#### WHEN A FRIEND IS IN TROUBLE

David had other associates who loyally stood by him in difficult times. One such associate was Hushai, whom the Bible refers to as "David's friend." (2 Sam. 16:16; 1 Chron. 27:33) He may have been a court official who was a personal friend and companion to the king, one who at times carried out confidential orders.

When David's son Absalom usurped the throne, many Israelites took Absalom's side, but not Hushai. While David was fleeing, Hushai went to him. David felt deeply hurt because of being betrayed by his own son and by some whom he had trusted. However, Hushai remained loyal, as one who was willing to risk his life and accomplish a mission that would thwart the conspiracy. Hushai did not simply do so out of a sense of duty as a court official. He proved to be a loyal friend.—2 Sam. 15:13-17, 32-37; 16:15-17:16.

It is heartwarming to see how brothers and sisters today are united by a bond that goes beyond any role or assignment in the congregation. By their actions they are in

When Federico faced a difficulty, his friend Antonio listened to him and encouraged him



effect saying, “I am your friend, not because I have to be, but because you are important to me.”

This is what a brother named Federico experienced. With the help of his dear friend Antonio, he got through a rough patch in his life. Federico relates: “When Antonio moved to our congregation, we soon became friends. We were both ministerial servants, and we enjoyed working together. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed an elder. Besides being my friend, he was a spiritual role model for me.” Then Federico took a false step. He immediately sought spiritual help, but he no longer qualified to be a pioneer or a ministerial servant. How did Antonio react?

Federico recalls: “I could see that Antonio felt my pain. He tried his best to help me emotionally. He cared deeply about my spiritual recovery and never abandoned me. He encouraged me to regain my spiritual strength and not to give up.” Antonio

explains: “I spent more time with Federico. I wanted him to feel free to talk to me about anything, even about his pain.” Happily, in time Federico regained his balance and was later reappointed as a pioneer and a ministerial servant. Antonio concludes: “Although we now serve in different congregations, we are closer than ever.”

#### WOULD YOU FEEL BETRAYED?

How would you feel if a close friend turned his back on you when you needed him most? Few things could hurt more. Would you be able to forgive him? Would your relationship ever be as strong as it once was?

Think about what happened to Jesus during his last days on earth. He had spent much time with his faithful apostles, and they were united by a special bond. Jesus rightly called them his friends. (John 15: 15) Yet, what happened when he was arrested? The apostles fled. Peter had openly de-



clared that he would never abandon his Master, but on that very night, Peter denied knowing Jesus!—Matt. 26:31-33, 56, 69-75.

Jesus knew that he would be facing his final test alone. Still, he had reason to feel disappointed, even hurt. But his conversation with the disciples a few days after his resurrection does not reveal the slightest hint of disappointment, bitterness, or regret. Jesus did not feel the need to enumerate the disciples' shortcomings, including what they had done on the night he was arrested.

On the contrary, Jesus reassured Peter and the other apostles. He confirmed his trust in them by giving them instructions about the most important educational work in human history. To Jesus, the apostles were still his friends. His love made a lasting impression on them. They would try their best never again to let down their Master. Indeed, they successfully carried

out the task that he outlined for his followers.—Acts 1:8; Col. 1:23.

A sister named Elvira remembers vividly when she had a difference with her dear friend Giuliana: “When she told me that she was hurt because of what I had done,” Elvira recalls, “I felt awful. She had every right to be angry. But what struck me was that she was mostly concerned about me and what would result from my behavior. I will always appreciate that she didn’t focus on the wrong that I had done to her but, rather, on the damage I was doing to myself. I thanked Jehovah that I had a friend who put my welfare above her own feelings.”

Consequently, how will a good friend react when a friendship is in danger? He or she will be willing to talk kindly but openly when needed. That friend will be like Nathan and Hushai, who remained loyal even during bad times, and like Jesus, who was willing to forgive. Are you this type of friend?

# A Bible Name on an Ancient Jar

The shards of a 3,000-year-old ceramic jar unearthed in 2012 recently stirred the interest of researchers. What was so special about this find? It was not the fragments in themselves but what was written on them.

When archaeologists were finally able to piece the artifact together, they could decipher the ancient Canaanite script. It read: “Eshba’al Ben [son of] Beda’.” This is the first time that archaeologists have found this name in an ancient inscription.

Actually, another Eshbaal is mentioned in the Bible—he was one of the sons of King Saul. (1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39) Professor Yosef Garfinkel, who participated in the excavation, observes: “It is interesting to note that the name Eshba’al appears in the Bible, and now also in the archaeological record, only during the reign of King David.” Some think that it was a name unique to that specific time period. Once again, a detail in the Bible has been borne out by archaeological evidence.

Elsewhere in the Bible, the name Eshbaal is presented as Ish-bosheth, “baal” being replaced with “bosheth.” (2 Sam. 2:10) Why? “In II Samuel there was apparently reluctance to use the name Eshba’al, which was reminiscent of the Canaanite storm god Ba’al,” explain researchers, “but the original name . . . was preserved in the Book of Chronicles.”

