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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Why Be Forgiving?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Are You Forgiving?

BILL and his 16-year-old daughter, Lisa, had difficulty getting along. Minor disagreements between them frequently developed into shouting matches. Finally, the tension escalated to the point that Lisa was asked to leave the house.*

After a time, Lisa came to recognize that she was at fault and sought her father's forgiveness. But instead of overlooking Lisa's past mistakes, her embittered father rejected her efforts to make peace. Imagine! He was unwilling to extend mercy to his own daughter!

Centuries ago a blameless man was condemned to die for a crime that he did not commit. Witnesses bore false testimony, and political officials turned their heads, their eyes blind to justice. That innocent man was Jesus Christ. Shortly before he died, he prayerfully asked God: "Father,

forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."—Luke 23:34.

Jesus forgave freely, from his heart, and his followers were urged to imitate him in this regard. (Ephesians 4:32) Like Bill, however, many are heartlessly unwilling to forgive. How do you measure up in this regard? Are you willing to forgive others when they sin against you? And what about serious sins? Must these also be forgiven?

Forgiveness a Challenge

Granting forgiveness is not always easy. And in these critical times, human relations have become ever more problematic. Family life in particular is often fraught with stresses and pressures. The Christian apostle Paul long ago stated that such conditions would prevail in "the last days." He said: "Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, . . . without love of goodness, betrayers,

* Names have been changed.

headstrong, puffed up with pride.”—2 Timothy 3:1-4.

Inevitably, then, all of us face external forces that test our ability to forgive others. What is more, we also struggle against internal forces. Paul lamented: “The good that I wish I do not do, but the bad that I do not wish is what I practice. If, now, what I do not wish is what I do, the one working it out is no longer I, but the sin dwelling in me.” (Romans 7:19, 20) As a result, many of us are not as forgiving as we wish we were. After all, inherited imperfection and sin exert a powerful influence over all of us, sometimes robbing us of compassion for fellow humans.

When encouraged to forgive another for a small offense, one woman responded: “No one is worth the effort it takes to forgive.” On the surface such a comment may seem cold, callous, even cynical. Looking deeper, however, we see that it reveals the frustration that many people feel when they face a world that they view as selfish, uncaring, and hostile. One man said: “People take advantage of you when you forgive them. It’s like getting stepped on.”

Little wonder, then, that cultivating a forgiving attitude is difficult in these last days. Still, the Bible encourages us to forgive kindly. (Compare 2 Corinthians 2:7.) Why should we be forgiving?

Why Be Forgiving?

JEWISH scholar and writer Joseph Jacobs once described forgiveness as “the highest and most difficult of all moral lessons.” Indeed, many find the words “I forgive you” very difficult to say.

Forgiveness, it seems, is much like money. It can be spent freely and mercifully on others or can be hoarded stingily for oneself. The former is the godly way. We should cultivate generous spending habits when it comes to forgiveness. Why? Because God encourages this and because an unforgiving, vengeful spirit may only make matters worse.

Often heard are the words: “I don’t get mad; I get even!” Sadly, this statement is a guiding principle in many lives today. One woman, for example, refused to talk to her sister-in-law for over seven years because, as the woman says, “she did me unbeliev-

able dirt and I have never been able to forgive her.” But such silent treatment, when used as a lever to pry an apology from the accused or as a weapon with which to punish, rarely satisfies the desire for revenge. Rather, it may simply prolong the controversy, allowing a full-fledged grudge to develop. If this cycle of pain is not broken, the powerful clutches of vengeance can ruin relationships and even one’s health.

The Harm of an Unforgiving Spirit

When a person is unforgiving, the resulting conflict creates stress. In turn, stress can lead to serious illnesses. Dr. William S. Sadler wrote: “No one can appreciate so fully as a doctor the amazingly large percentage of human disease and suffering which is directly traceable to worry, fear, conflict, . . . unwholesome thinking and unclean living.” Really, though, how much

damage does emotional turmoil cause? One medical publication answers: "Statistics . . . indicated that two thirds of the patients who went to a physician had symptoms caused or aggravated by mental stress."

Yes, bitterness, resentment, and spite are far from harmless. These caustic emotions are like rust that slowly corrodes the body of a car. The car's outside may appear beautiful, but under the paint a destructive process is taking place.

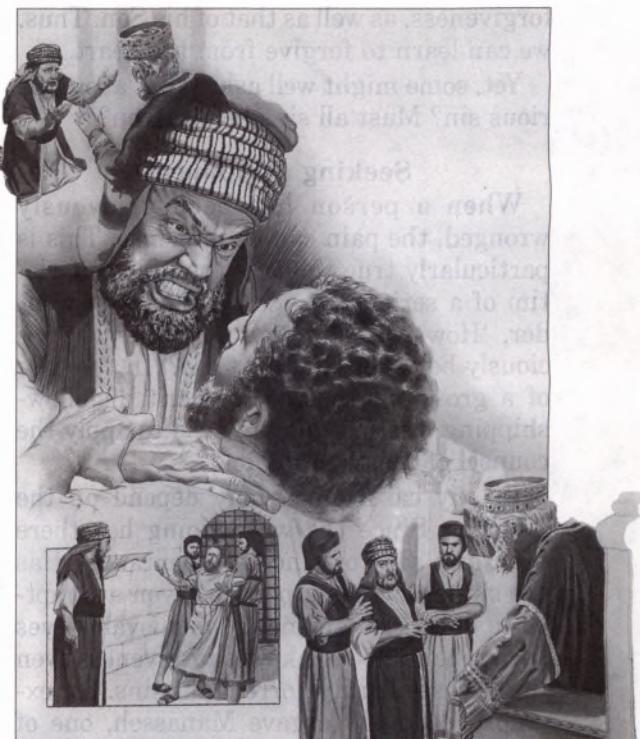
Even more important, our refusing to forgive when there is a basis for mercy can also harm us spiritually. In Jehovah God's eyes, we might become like the slave in Jesus' illustration. The slave was forgiven an enormous debt by his master. Yet, when his fellow slave pleaded with him to forgive a comparatively paltry debt, he was harsh and unforgiving. Jesus made it clear that if we are similarly unwilling to forgive, Jehovah will refuse to forgive us our sins. (Matthew 18:21-35) If we are unforgiving, therefore, we might lose our clean conscience before God and even our hope for the future! (Compare 2 Timothy 1:3.) What, then, can we do?

Learn to Forgive

True forgiveness stems from the heart. It involves pardoning an offender's error and giving up any desire for revenge. Thus, final justice and possible retribution are left in Jehovah's hands.—Romans 12:19.

It must be noted, however, that since "the heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate," it does not always lean toward forgiveness even when it should. (Jeremiah 17:9) Jesus himself said: "Out of the heart come wicked reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornications, thieveries, false testimonies, blasphemies."—Matthew 15:19.

Thankfully, our heart can be trained to do what is right. However, the training



Did you get the point of Jesus' illustration of the unforgiving slave?

we need must come from a higher source. We cannot do it alone. (Jeremiah 10:23) A divinely inspired psalmist recognized this and prayed for God's direction. He beseeched Jehovah in prayer: "Teach me your regulations. Make me understand the way of your own orders."—Psalm 119:26, 27.

According to another psalm, King David of ancient Israel came to "understand the way" of Jehovah. He experienced it firsthand and learned from it. Hence, he was able to say: "Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness. As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him."—Psalm 103:8, 13.

We need to learn as David did. Prayerfully study God's perfect example of

forgiveness, as well as that of his Son. Thus, we can learn to forgive from the heart.

Yet, some might well ask: What about serious sin? Must all sins be forgiven?

Seeking a Balance

When a person has been grievously wronged, the pain can be immense. This is particularly true if one is the innocent victim of a serious sin. Some may even wonder, ‘How can I forgive someone who viciously betrayed and hurt me?’ In the case of a gross sin that could merit disfellowshipping, the victim may need to apply the counsel of Matthew 18:15-17.

In any case, much may depend on the offender. Since the wrongdoing has there been any sign of sincere repentance? Has the sinner changed, perhaps even attempted to make real amends? In Jehovah's eyes such repentance is a key to forgiveness even in the case of truly horrendous sins. For example, Jehovah forgave Manasseh, one of the most wicked kings in Israel's history. On what basis? God did so because Manasseh finally humbled himself and repented of his vile ways.—2 Chronicles 33:12, 13.

In the Bible genuine repentance involves a sincere change in attitude, a heartfelt regret over any wrongs committed. Where appropriate and possible, repentance is accompanied by an effort to make restitution to the victim of the sin. (Luke 19:7-10; 2 Corinthians 7:11) Where there is no such repentance, Jehovah does not forgive.*

* However, Jehovah does take other factors into account when weighing forgiveness. For instance, if a wrongdoer is ignorant of God's standards, such ignorance may lessen the burden of guilt. When Jesus asked his Father to forgive his executioners, Jesus evidently was speaking of the Roman soldiers who put him to death. They 'did not know what they were doing,' being ignorant of who he really was. However, the religious leaders who were behind that execution bore far greater guilt—and for many of them, no forgiveness was possible.—John 11:45-53; compare Acts 17:30.

Moreover, God does not expect Christians to forgive those who were once enlightened spiritually but who now willfully, unrepentantly practice wrongdoing. (Hebrews 10:26-31) In extreme cases, forgiveness may well be inappropriate.—Psalm 139:21, 22; Ezekiel 18:30-32.

Whether forgiveness is possible or not, a victim of serious sin may want to weigh another question: Must I remain in severe emotional turmoil, feeling intensely hurt and angry, until the matter is fully resolved? Consider an example. King David felt intensely hurt when his general, Joab, murdered Abner and Amasa, “two men more righteous and better than [Joab] was.” (1 Kings 2:32) David expressed his outrage orally and undoubtedly to Jehovah in prayer. In time, though, the sheer intensity of David's feelings likely subsided. He was not dominated by outrage to the end of his days. David even continued to work with Joab, but he did not simply forgive this unrepentant killer. David saw to it that justice was done in the end.—2 Samuel 3:28-39; 1 Kings 2:5, 6.

It may take some time and work before those hurt by the serious sins of others get over their initial anger. The healing process may be much easier when the offender acknowledges his wrong and repents. However, an innocent victim of sin should be able to find comfort and solace in his knowledge of Jehovah's justice and wisdom and in the Christian congregation, regardless of the wrongdoer's course.

Recognize, too, that when you do forgive a sinner, this does not mean that you are condoning the sin. For the Christian, forgiveness means trustfully leaving the matter in Jehovah's hands. He is the righteous Judge of all the universe, and he will carry



out justice at the right time. That will include judging treacherous "fornicators and adulterers."—Hebrews 13:4.

The Benefits of Forgiving

The psalmist David sang: "For you, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive; and the loving-kindness to all those calling upon you is abundant." (Psalm 86:5) Are you, like Jehovah, "ready to forgive"? The benefits are many.

First, forgiving others promotes good relations. The Bible urges Christians: "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you."—Ephesians 4:32.

Second, forgiveness brings peace. This is not just peace with fellow humans but inner peace as well.—Romans 14:19; Colossians 3:13-15.

Third, forgiving others helps us to re-

Forgiving others promotes good relations and brings happiness

member that we ourselves are in need of forgiveness. Yes, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."—Romans 3:23.

Finally, forgiving others clears the way for our sins to be forgiven by God. Jesus said: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."—Matthew 6:14.

Imagine the many things that must have occupied Jesus' mind on the afternoon of his death. He was concerned about his disciples, the preaching work, and especially his integrity to Jehovah. Yet, even when he was suffering intensely on the torture stake, what did he speak about? Among his last words were, "Father, forgive them." (Luke 23:34) We can imitate Jesus' perfect example by forgiving one another from the heart.

Jehovah's Witnesses Around the World

NIGERIA is wedged into the curve at the base of Africa's western bulge. Situated on the Gulf of Guinea, it is just north of the equator and has more than 88 million inhabitants.*

During the past two service years, the Nigeria branch office of the Watch Tower Society has given special attention to the young. A survey in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses showed that 80 percent of those who began preaching the good news in Nigeria during 1992 were between 10 and 20 years of age. Of those baptized during the year, 63 percent were of that age group.

Youths Reach Out to Pioneer

Many young people are entering the full-time preaching work as pioneers. A pioneer named Hannah says: "When I was about to finish school, I visited those attending the Pioneer Service School, where I met two elderly sisters. I thought to myself, 'If those two can pioneer, why can't I?'

"So after I finished school, I became a pioneer. Three months later I met 26-year-old Josephine, a juju worshiper. She said: 'You Jehovah's Witnesses are bad people. You do

not celebrate Christmas or use charms.' I answered that if she allowed me to study the Bible with her, she would learn why we do not practice those things. She invited me back. She soon began to attend meetings and made many changes in her life. In December 1990 she was baptized. Since August 1991, Josephine has been a pioneer. When she attended the Pioneer Service School last year, she introduced me to her classmates as her spiritual mother!"

The Video and the Kingdom Hall

One of the Society's video recordings helped a small congregation to obtain land for a Kingdom Hall. Seeking to buy land, four brothers approached the Onojie, the area's traditional ruler. He offered them a plot for 20,000 naira (\$1,025, U.S.). The congregation could not afford to pay that much, since there were only 17 publishers to finance the project. The Onojie said he would think about another site.

Some months later, one of the congregation elders visited the Onojie's residence. The Onojie was watching a video recording of his coronation. The elder said: "I have a video I would like you to see. It's called Jehovah's Witnesses—The Organization Behind the Name."

Later, the elder asked what the Onojie thought of the video. "I watched the film five times," said the Onojie. The elder reminded the Onojie of the Kingdom Halls he had seen in the video and explained that the local congregation wanted to build something similar. He then asked if the congregation could purchase some land adjacent to a small plot it already owned. The Onojie replied: "Last night after watching the video, I thought of the same thing." With that, he measured off 20 feet of land next to the congregation's property. "You can have this," he said. "Lengthwise, you can take as much as you need. Prepare the documents, and I will sign them."



* For additional information, see the 1994 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses.



NIGERIA



COUNTRY PROFILE 1993 Service Year

PEAK NUMBER WITNESSING:
174,582

RATIO:

1 Witness to 507

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE:
473,245

AVERAGE PIONEER PUBLISHERS:
19,777

AVERAGE BIBLE STUDIES:
242,028

NUMBER BAPTIZED:
8,888

NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS:
3,289

BRANCH OFFICE:
BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

MAKE PUBLIC DECLARATION TO JEHOVAH'S NAME

"Let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." —HEBREWS 13:15.

JEHOVAH'S prophet Hosea had a vital message for his fellow Israelites. In the eighth century before the Common Era, he exhorted his wayward contemporaries to repent. He urged: "Take with yourselves words and come back to Jehovah. Say to him, all you people, 'May you pardon error; and accept what is good, and we will offer in return the young bulls of our lips.'" (Hosea 14:2) In urging the people to offer Jehovah 'the young bulls of their lips,' Hosea's prophecy was encouraging the Israelites to repent and render sacrifices of sincere praise to God.

² Witnesses of Jehovah offer 'the young bulls of their lips' today. They also heed the exhortation of the apostle Paul, who alluded to those words in Hosea's prophecy when he wrote: "Through [Jesus Christ] let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." (Hebrews 13:15) Thus, God's servants joyfully praise Jehovah, as in their Kingdom-preaching activity.—Matthew 24:14.

³ Making public declaration to Jehovah's name is an undeserved privilege for imper-

1. What did the prophet Hosea urge fellow Israelites to do?
2. What kind of sacrifice did the apostle Paul encourage Christians to offer?
3. How can we offer Jehovah "a sacrifice of praise," and whose activities shall we now examine?

fect humans. How happy we are to tell others about our God, thereby offering Jehovah "a sacrifice of praise," "the young bulls of our lips"! For our encouragement in publicly preaching the good news of the Kingdom today, let us examine what the Bible tells us about God's prophets and other servants of Jehovah. From their course of life, we can learn much that will help us to enjoy our preaching activity.—Romans 15:4.

The Role of the Prophets

⁴ Jehovah's prophets were privileged to proclaim his message publicly. The Hebrew term for "prophet" (*na-vi'*) has an uncertain etymology, but its use in the Bible indicates that true prophets were spokesmen for Jehovah, men of God with inspired messages. The Greek word rendered "prophet" (*pro-phe'tes*) literally means "a speaker out," to say something "*in front of*" or "*before*" someone. A prophet is one who proclaims messages attributed to a divine source. Often, but not always, God's true prophets predicted future events.

⁵ Regarding the striking role of the prophets in God's arrangement, M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopædia* states: "Sometimes their advice was asked . . . But much more

4, 5. (a) In the Bible's original languages, what is the basic meaning of the words translated "prophet"? (b) What indicates that the prophets had a striking role in God's arrangement?

frequently they felt themselves inwardly moved to address the people without their advice having been asked, and they were not afraid to stand forward in places where their appearance, perhaps, produced indignation and terror." (Volume VIII, page 640) Consider some examples of what prompted the prophets to take such a courageous stand.

Feelings and Motivation

⁶ Before the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E., Jehovah spoke to the Jewish exiles in Babylon through his prophet Ezekiel. Jehovah told him: "Son of man, what you find, eat. Eat this roll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." Ezekiel obeyed. He said: "So I opened my mouth, and he gradually made me eat this roll. And he went on to say to me: 'Son of man, you should cause your own belly to eat, that you may fill your very intestines with this roll that I am giving you.' And I began to eat it, and it came to be in my mouth like honey for sweetness."—Ezekiel 3:1-3.

⁷ Our bodies draw nutrients from the food that we eat, and in a sense these become part of us. Similarly, the "roll" eaten by Ezekiel—Jehovah's message that the prophet had to declare—was to become a part of him, affecting his emotions. God's words so stirred Ezekiel's inmost feelings that declaring them in public was a delight for him. If you are a Witness of Jehovah, do you take pleasure in making public declaration of God's message?

⁸ Consider, too, the prophet Amos. Living in the ninth century B.C.E., he was among the first of the Hebrew prophets to pen a Bible book named after himself. Like Ezekiel, Amos was a forthright proclaim-

6, 7. What did Jehovah have his prophet Ezekiel eat, and what effect did this have?
8, 9. What moved Amos to prophesy?

er of Jehovah's word. Why, the expression 'this is what Jehovah has said' is repeatedly used throughout the book bearing his name! (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6, 11; 3:12; 5:3, 4, 16; 7:17) Amos felt the need to declare God's words publicly.

¹⁰ As God's prophet, Amos reacted to divine declarations by taking prompt action. Through Amos, God said: "There is a lion that has roared! Who will not be afraid? The Sovereign Lord Jehovah himself has spoken! Who will not prophesy?" (Amos 3:8) The prophet was irresistibly motivated to declare Jehovah's message.

¹¹ In lionlike fashion Jehovah roars forth messages of judgment on the present wicked world system. Like Amos, Jehovah's modern-day servants feel impelled to declare God's words publicly. Even when threatened by opposers, they follow the example of the apostles Peter and John, who forcefully declared: "As for us, we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard." The apostles also affirmed: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 4:20; 5:29) What, then, about us? It is good to examine our feelings about making public declaration to Jehovah's name.

"Out Of the Heart's Abundance"

¹² There can be no doubt that Jehovah's prophets were grateful for their privileges. Similar gratitude to Jehovah should move us to make public declaration to his name. Psalm 145:1, 2 states: "I will exalt you, O my God the King, and I will bless your name to time indefinite, even forever. All day long I will bless you, and I will praise your name to time indefinite,

10. How do Jehovah's present-day servants react when their preaching work is opposed?

11. What should prompt us to persevere in making public declaration to Jehovah's name?

even forever." Do those words reflect your attitude? Regular Bible study helps us to deepen our appreciation for what Jehovah has done, is doing, and will yet do for us. And when we study the Bible together as a family, do we not find that God's Word exerts power, making us want to speak about him and his purposes? (Hebrews 4:12) In order to be effective in making public declaration to Jehovah's name, we also need to make full use of the Christian publications provided by Jehovah God through the anointed "faithful and discreet slave."

—Matthew 24:45-47.

¹² If we are to praise Jehovah out of grateful hearts, we need to attend Christian meetings regularly. All of Jehovah's people should heed the apostle Paul's admonition: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Are you regularly present at Christian meetings? Do you often talk about the Scriptural truths, the fine experiences, and the exciting news of theocratic expansion that you hear at the meetings of God's people? If you are reluctant to express yourself about Jehovah and his purposes, allow time for meditation on his Word so that his thoughts penetrate deep into your heart. (Psalm 77:12; 143:5) Yes, both Christian meetings and regular meditation on God's Word should help you to appreciate the wonderful privilege of making public declaration to Jehovah's name.

¹³ With hearts full of gratitude to Jehovah, we bring forth good things. "A good

12. How can both Christian meetings and meditation help us to make public declaration?
13. How do we 'bring forth good' from our hearts?

man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart," Jesus reasoned, "but a wicked man brings forth what is wicked out of his wicked treasure; for out of the heart's abundance his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45) What better way can there be to 'bring forth good' than to make public declaration to Jehovah's name and speak about his purposes to our neighbors, our relatives—indeed, to all we meet?

Results of Public Declaration

¹⁴ God's prophets found joy in their service, and what they said benefited receptive hearers. Comparably, public declaration of the Kingdom message brings great joy to its proclaimers. (Acts 20:35) And how it benefits appreciative hearers! Accepting the good news helps people to conquer depression or to cope with it. Bereaved ones rejoice over resurrection prospects. Addicts escape slavery to nicotine, heroin, and other addictive substances. Many are uplifted morally, and all who accept Bible truth gain spiritual freedom. (John 5:28, 29; 8:32) Heralding the Kingdom as mankind's only hope also serves to warn the wicked, while producing a glad response in the honest-hearted. Thus people are being separated either for "everlasting cutting-off" or for "everlasting life" when divine judgment is executed upon this wicked world. (Matthew 24:14; 25:31-46; Ezekiel 33:1-9; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Our preaching work is an unprecedented rescue operation, the most extensive and widely publicized declaration ever to be carried out on the earth!

¹⁵ As Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses, we gladly and obediently slave for our heav-

14. (a) What can the declarer and the hearer of the Kingdom message experience? (b) What is being accomplished by means of the Kingdom-preaching work?

15. What can be done to help prospective deserving ones in our witnessing territory?

**Purposeful companionship
can help us to improve
in the ministry**

only Father. (Romans 12:11) Therefore, we are happy to set aside time regularly to engage in the work of preaching the good news publicly and from house to house. (Acts 5:42; 20:20) Worldwide reports indicate that there are yet some deserving ones in our territories. As circumstances in the world change, people are affected in various ways. Many have unexpectedly become refugees, aliens in a foreign land. Perhaps there are some of these people in our witnessing territory. If so, let us do what we can to help them spiritually as we persevere in "the holy work of the good news." (Romans 15:16) Some Christians have learned another language so as to declare the good news of the Kingdom to such people.

¹⁶ Many of God's prophets had very difficult assignments. It was not easy for them to declare divine messages to unresponsive people. Similarly, not everyone dedicated to Jehovah finds it easy to make public declaration to His name, especially in largely unresponsive territories. However, by having the confidence that results from prayerful study of God's Word, coupled with the strength that Jehovah supplies, we can persevere in declaring the Kingdom message. (Philippians 4:13; Revelation 14:6) In this regard, what else can we learn from Jehovah's prophets and his other servants of ancient times?

16. What can help us to persevere in declaring Jehovah's name?



Companionship in the Field Ministry

¹⁷ In caring for his assignment, God's prophet Moses initially had the help of his older brother, Aaron. Jehovah told Moses: "[Aaron] must speak for you to the people;

17. What are some Scriptural examples of beneficial companionship in God's service?

and it must occur that he will serve as a mouth to you." (Exodus 4:16) Consider, too, the days of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, when "the sons of the prophets" flourished. These appear to have been groups of God's servants who worked together, undoubtedly enjoying pleasant companionship with one another. (2 Kings 2:3-5; 4:38; compare 1 Samuel 10:5, 10.) Of course, Moses and Aaron and "the sons of the prophets" were not engaged in declaring the good news of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, their association was beneficial to all of them. Centuries later Jesus Christ sent 70 disciples out into the ministry "by twos," and doubtless these benefited from the companionship thus provided.—Luke 10:1-16; compare Acts 17:10, 11; 20:20.

¹⁸ In the year 1953, Jehovah's Witnesses embarked on a program in which Kingdom proclaimers worked together in the field ministry. Of course, this was not done just for the sake of companionship. This training program was designed to make God's servants more effective teachers and preachers of the good news. With that objective in mind, more experienced Kingdom publishers shared in the ministry with

18. How has companionship in the ministry served a useful purpose today?

Did You Grasp These Points?

- What did both Hosea and the apostle Paul say about sacrifices to God?
- What motivated Ezekiel and Amos to prophesy?
- How should we view our Kingdom-preaching work?
- What benefits can be derived from companionship in the field ministry?

newer ones. This house-to-house training program has been highly beneficial and has helped Jehovah's people to improve in making public declaration to his name. (1 Timothy 4:16) Today, safety is another factor making it advisable for Christians to engage in the ministry "by twos," especially in some areas.

¹⁹ Whether you are working with a fellow believer in the ministry or you are going to a door alone, make an effort to achieve some personal goal or objective. It should be realistic, reachable. Do you need help in adapting your introduction so as to arouse the interest of the people in your territory? If so, perhaps you can accompany a pioneer, a full-time Kingdom proclaimer, or a publisher who may be especially effective in using good introductions. Your companion may be able to assist you in preparing and using the introductions outlined in *Our Kingdom Ministry* or the book *Reasoning From the Scriptures*. On occasions when you witness together from house to house, listen carefully to your companion's presentations. Then try a similar presentation yourself until you become adept at this aspect of your ministry.

²⁰ What if you need help in making effective return visits with a view to starting a home Bible study? Perhaps through your Congregation Book Study conductor, arrangements can be made for you to work in the field service with a Kingdom publisher who has been quite effective in starting Bible studies. Do not be a silent partner when you make return visits together. Rather, after your companion shows how he or she handles matters during one call,

19. What should be kept in mind regarding personal goals in the ministry?

20, 21. What can make companionship in the field ministry especially helpful?

you may find it beneficial to make a similar presentation when making the next return visit. Your companion will be there to help and to offer advice afterward.—Compare Galatians 6:6.

²¹ Such loving assistance from a field-service companion can help you to reach your objectives in the ministry. This help and your deep appreciation for Jehovah's loving-kindness in permitting you to do this privileged work will enable you to be even more effective in your Kingdom-preaching activities. And may you cherish your privilege of blessing Jehovah by always speaking well of him and by regular-

ly making public declaration to his name.—Psalm 145:1, 2, 9-13.

²² As Jehovah's Witnesses, we make repeated visits in our house-to-house ministry. Many are listening to the good news with deep appreciation. However, some may be reluctant to listen to the Kingdom message. What should we do under such circumstances? How can we persevere in the work Jehovah has assigned to his people? What Scriptural examples can assist or guide us? These questions will be answered in the next article.

22. What questions will our next study help us to answer?

TAKE AS A PATTERN THE PROPHETS OF GOD

"Brothers, take as a pattern of the suffering of evil and the exercising of patience the prophets, who spoke in the name of Jehovah."—JAMES 5:10.

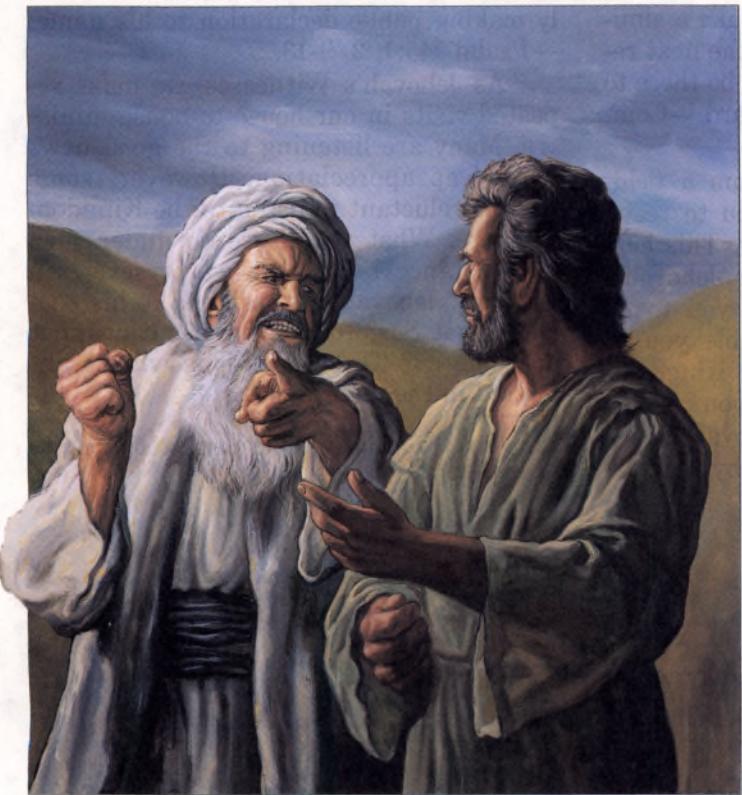
JEHOVAH'S servants radiate joy despite the gloom rampant worldwide in these last days. This is so because they know that they are pleasing God. Witnesses of Jehovah also bear up under persecution and opposition to their public ministry because they realize that they are suffering for righteousness' sake. Jesus Christ told his followers: "Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake. Rejoice and leap for joy, since your reward is great in the heavens;

1. What helps Jehovah's servants to be joyful even when they are persecuted?

for in that way they persecuted the prophets prior to you." (Matthew 5:10-12) Indeed, whenever God's servants face trials of faith, they consider these a joy.—James 1:2, 3.

² The disciple James wrote: "Brothers, take as a pattern of the suffering of evil and the exercising of patience the prophets, who spoke in the name of Jehovah." (James 5:10) W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich define the Greek word here rendered "pattern" (*hy-po'deig-ma*) as "*example, model, pattern, in a good sense as someth[ing]*

2. According to James 5:10, what can help us to exercise patience?



Despite Amaziah's rabid opposition, Jehovah's spirit empowered Amos to prophesy courageously

Amaziah falsely claimed that Amos conspired against Jeroboam II by prophesying that the king would die by the sword and that Israel would go into exile. Contemptuously, Amaziah told Amos: "O visionary, go, run your way off to the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and there you may prophesy. But at Bethel you must no longer do any further prophesying, for it is the sanctuary of a king and it is the house of a kingdom." Undeterred by this verbal onslaught, Amos answered: "I was not a prophet, neither

was I the son of a prophet; but I was a herdsman and a nipper of figs of sycamore trees. And Jehovah proceeded to take me from following the flock, and Jehovah went on to say to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"
—Amos 7:10-15.

⁴ Jehovah's spirit empowered Amos to prophesy courageously. Imagine Amaziah's reaction as Amos said: "Hear the word of Jehovah, 'Are you saying: 'You must not prophesy against Israel, and you must let no word drop against the house of Isaac'?' Therefore this is what Jehovah has said: "As regards your wife, in the city she will become a prostitute. And as regards your sons and your daughters, by the sword they will fall. And as regards your ground, by the measuring rope it will be apportioned

that does or should spur one on to imitate it." As shown at John 13:15, "this is more than an example. It is a definite prototype." (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*) So, then, Jehovah's modern-day servants can take his faithful prophets as a pattern with respect to 'suffering evil' and 'exercising patience.' What else can we discern when we study their lives? And how can this help us in our preaching activity?

They Suffered Evil

³ Jehovah's prophets often suffered evil or ill-treatment. In the ninth century B.C.E., for instance, the calf-worshiping priest Amaziah wickedly opposed the prophet Amos.

3, 4. How did the prophet Amos react to opposition from Amaziah?

out. And as regards you yourself, on unclean ground you will die; and as regards Israel, it will without fail go into exile from its own ground.”” That prophecy came to pass. (Amos 7:16, 17) How shocked apostate Amaziah must have been!

⁵ This is similar to the situation of Jehovah's people today. We suffer evil as those who declare God's messages, and many people speak contemptuously about our preaching activity. True, our authorization to preach does not come from a theological seminary. Rather, Jehovah's holy spirit impels us to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom. We neither change nor water down God's message. Instead, like Amos, we obediently declare it regardless of the reaction of our hearers.—2 Corinthians 2:15-17.

They Exercised Patience

⁶ God's prophets exercised patience. For instance, patience was displayed by Isaiah, who served as Jehovah's prophet in the eighth century B.C.E. God told him: “Go, and you must say to this people, ‘Hear again and again, O men, but do not understand; and see again and again, but do not get any knowledge.’ Make the heart of this people unreceptive, and make their very ears unresponsive, and paste their very eyes together, that they may not see with their eyes and with their ears they may not hear, and that their own heart may not understand and that they may not actually turn back and get healing for themselves.” (Isaiah 6:9, 10) The people did indeed react that way. But did this cause Isaiah to quit? No.

5. What parallel can be drawn between the situation of Jehovah's modern-day servants and that of the prophet Amos?

6, 7. (a) What characterized Isaiah's prophesying? (b) How do Jehovah's present-day servants act like Isaiah?

Rather, he patiently and zealously declared Jehovah's warning messages. The Hebrew structure of God's words just quoted supports the thought of the “long *continuance*” of the prophet's proclamations, which people heard “again and again.”—Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*.

⁷ Today many react to the good news just as people reacted to Jehovah's words conveyed by Isaiah. Like that faithful prophet, however, we repeat the Kingdom message “again and again.” We do so with zeal and patient persistence because this is Jehovah's will.

“They Did Just So”

⁸ The prophet Moses was exemplary in patience and obedience. He chose to take his stand with the enslaved Israelites, but he had to wait patiently for the time of their deliverance. For 40 years he lived in Midian until God used him to lead the people of Israel out of slavery. When Moses and his brother Aaron were before Egypt's ruler, they obediently said and did what God commanded. In fact, “they did just so.”—Exodus 7:1-6; Hebrews 11:24-29.

⁹ Moses patiently endured Israel's 40 rigorous years in the wilderness. He also obediently followed divine direction in the construction of Israel's tabernacle and the making of other things used in Jehovah's worship. So closely did the prophet follow God's instructions that we read: “Moses proceeded to do according to all that Jehovah had commanded him. He did just so.” (Exodus 40:16) In carrying out our ministry in association with Jehovah's organization, let us remember Moses' obedience and apply the apostle Paul's counsel to ‘be

8, 9. In what ways is Jehovah's prophet Moses a fine example?



Faithful anointed ones have set a fine example by exercising patience in Jehovah's service

a positive attitude and keep on looking for those who will wisely accept God's undeserved kindness.

¹¹ To 'search out deserving ones,' we need to persevere and to view matters positively. (Matthew 10:11) For example, if we were to misplace our keys, we might retrace our steps and search in the various places where we had been. We might find them only after doing this repeatedly. Let us similarly persevere in searching out sheep-like ones. What joy we have when they respond to the good news in often-worked territory! And how we rejoice that God is blessing our work in lands where restrictions formerly limited our public ministry!

—Galatians 6:10.

They Had a Positive Attitude

¹⁰ The prophets needed to have a positive attitude as they delivered judgment messages as well as prophecies reflecting God's loving concern for faithful ones scattered about in Israel. This was true of Hosea, who was a prophet for no less than 59 years. In a positive way, he kept on delivering Jehovah's messages and concluded his prophetic book with the words: "Who is wise, that he may understand these things? Discreet, that he may know them? For the ways of Jehovah are upright, and the righteous are the ones who will walk in them; but the transgressors are the ones who will stumble in them." (Hosea 14:9) As long as Jehovah allows us to give a witness, let us have

10, 11. (a) What indicates that the prophet Hosea had a positive outlook? (b) How can we maintain a positive attitude when we approach people in our territories?

Sources of Encouragement

¹² The words of Jehovah's prophets can be of great encouragement to us in our ministry. For instance, consider the prophecy of Joel. It contains judgment messages that were directed to apostate Israelites and others in the ninth century B.C.E. Yet, Joel was also inspired to prophesy: "It must occur that I [Jehovah] shall pour out my spirit on every sort of flesh, and your sons and your daughters will certainly prophesy. As for your old men, dreams they will dream. As for your young men, visions they will see. And even on the menservants and on the maid-servants in those days I shall pour out my spirit." (Joel 2:28, 29) This proved true of Jesus' followers from Pentecost 33 C.E. onward. And what a grand fulfillment of this prophecy we see in this

12. What prophecy of Joel is having a 20th-century fulfillment, and how?

20th century! Today we have millions who "prophesy," or proclaim Jehovah's message—among them well over 600,000 in the full-time pioneer service.

¹³ Many Kingdom proclaimers are young people. It is not always easy for them to talk to older ones about the Bible. Sometimes youthful servants of Jehovah are told: 'You are wasting your time preaching,' and 'you should be doing something else.' Tactfully young Witnesses of Jehovah may reply that they are sorry the person feels that way. One youthful preacher of the good news finds it helpful to add: "I feel I really benefit from talking to older people like you, and I enjoy it." Of course, preaching the good news is certainly no waste of time. Lives are at stake. Through Joel, God further declared: "It must occur that everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe."—Joel 2:32.

¹⁴ Children who accompany their parents in Kingdom-preaching activity welcome parental help in setting personal goals. Step-by-step such youngsters progress from reading a scripture to explaining their Bible-based hope and offering appropriate literature to interested people. As they see their own progress and Jehovah's blessing, young Kingdom publishers find great joy in preaching the good news.—Psalm 110:3; 148:12, 13.

Zeal and a Waiting Attitude

¹⁵ God's prophets were also exemplary in displaying both zeal and a waiting attitude—traits we need in our ministry today. When we first learned the truth from God's Word, likely we were fired with zeal that

13, 14. What can help young Christians to find joy in the field ministry?

15. How can Ezekiel's example help us to rekindle our zeal for the Kingdom-preaching work?

moved us to speak out boldly. But years may have passed since then, and we may have covered our witnessing territory often. Fewer people may now be accepting the Kingdom message. Has this damped our zeal? If so, consider the prophet Ezekiel, whose name means "God Strengthens." Though Ezekiel faced hardhearted people in ancient Israel, God strengthened him and figuratively made his forehead harder than flint. Thus, Ezekiel was able to carry out his ministry for many, many years whether the people listened or not. His example shows that we can do the same, and it can help us to rekindle our zeal for the preaching work.—Ezekiel 3:8, 9; 2 Timothy 4:5.

¹⁶ Noteworthy for his patience was Micah, who prophesied in the eighth century B.C.E. "As for me," he wrote, "it is for Jehovah that I shall keep on the lookout. I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me." (Micah 7:7) Micah's confidence was rooted in his strong faith. Like the prophet Isaiah, Micah knew that what Jehovah purposed He would surely do. We know this too. (Isaiah 55:11) Let us therefore cultivate a waiting attitude toward the fulfillment of God's promises. And let us preach the good news with zeal, even in areas where people show little interest in the Kingdom message.—Titus 2:14; James 5:7-10.

Exercising Patience Today

¹⁷ Some of Jehovah's prophets patiently persisted in their assignments for years but did not see the fulfillment of their prophecies. Yet, their patient perseverance, often while suffering ill-treatment,

16. What attitude of Micah should we cultivate?

17, 18. What ancient and modern examples can help us to exercise patience?

helps us to realize that we can fulfill our ministry. We can also benefit from the example of faithful anointed ones in the early decades of the 20th century. Though their heavenly hopes were not realized as quickly as they expected, they did not allow disappointment over a seeming delay to dampen their zeal for doing God's will as he revealed it to them.

¹⁸ For years, many of these Christians regularly distributed *The Watchtower* and its companion journal, *Awake!*, (formerly named *The Golden Age* and later *Consolation*). They zealously made these valued journals available to people on the streets and at their homes on what we today call magazine routes. One elderly sister who finished her earthly course was quickly missed by passersby accustomed to seeing her witnessing on the street. What a witness she gave during her many years of faithful service, as shown by the appreciative remarks of those who had observed her public ministry! As a Kingdom proclaimer, are you regularly placing *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* in the hands of those you meet in your ministry?

Did You Grasp These Points?

- What courageous example did the prophet Amos set?
- In what ways was the prophet Moses exemplary?
- How can Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses act like Amos and Isaiah?
- What can Christian ministers learn from the conduct of Hosea and Joel?
- How can we benefit from the examples of Ezekiel and Micah?

¹⁹ Consider, too, the patience and faithful service of the brothers who serve as members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. Several of them are now in the ninth or tenth decade of their life, but they are still Kingdom proclaimers who zealously care for their assigned duties. (Hebrews 13:7) And what of other elderly ones with the heavenly hope and even some among the "other sheep" who are getting along in years? (John 10:16) They can be sure that God is not unrighteous so as to forget their work and the love they show for his name. Along with younger fellow believers, may aged Witnesses of Jehovah press on in doing what they can, exercising faith and showing patience in God's service. (Hebrews 6:10-12) Then, whether by resurrection, as with the prophets of old, or by survival right through the coming "great tribulation," they will reap the rich reward of life eternal.—Matthew 24:21.

²⁰ What a fine pattern God's prophets have left us! Because they endured suffering, exercised patience, and manifested other godly qualities, they were privileged to speak in Jehovah's name. As his modern-day Witnesses, let us be like them and be as resolute as the prophet Habakkuk, who declared: "At my guard post I will keep standing, and I will keep myself stationed upon the bulwark; and I shall keep watch, to see what [God] will speak by me." (Habakkuk 2:1) Let us have similar determination as we exercise patience and joyfully continue to make public declaration to the illustrious name of our Grand Creator, Jehovah!—Nehemiah 8:10; Romans 10:10.

19. What encouragement does Hebrews 6:10-12 offer us?

20. (a) What have you learned from the "pattern" of the prophets? (b) How can prophetlike patience help us?

Do not let loneliness blight your life

LONELINESS can blight the lives of old and young alike. Says writer Judith Viorst in *Redbook* magazine: "Loneliness lies like a stone on the heart. . . . Loneliness leaves us empty and despairing. Loneliness makes us feel like a motherless child, like a lamb gone astray, so little and lost in a world so vast and uncaring." —September 1991.

Separation from friends, unfamiliar surroundings, divorce, bereavement, or breakdown in communication—all kinds of things can make you lonely. Even when surrounded by other people, some are intensely lonely.

What Can You Do?

If loneliness does strike, must you be simply a helpless victim? Can you do anything to prevent loneliness from destroying you step-by-step or draining away your will to live? Indeed you can. Much helpful advice is available. And much good counsel is given in God's inspired Word, the Bible. Such encouragement may be just what you need to fight loneliness.—Matthew 11:28, 29.

You may find it encouraging, for example, to read about Ruth, a young woman who lived in the Middle East some 3,000 years ago. She was a prime candidate for loneliness. When her husband died, she went with her mother-in-law to live in the unfamiliar surroundings of Israel. (Ruth 2:11) Although she was deprived of her family and former friends and was a foreigner in a strange land, there is no indi-

cation in the Bible that she let loneliness engulf her. You can read her story in the Bible book of Ruth.

Like Ruth, you need to keep a positive outlook. The way you think about matters and events can foster loneliness. Ann, who for four years nursed her father through a debilitating illness, verifies this. When he died she became extremely lonely. "I felt as if I were in a void, totally worthless—as if nobody needed me anymore," she says. "But I faced the fact that my life had now changed, and I realized that to combat my loneliness I had to make the best of the circumstances I now had." Sometimes you cannot change your circumstances, but it is probable that you can change your attitude toward them.

Keeping busy in rewarding activity is not the whole answer to combating loneliness, although it does help. Irene, who was widowed after only six months of marriage, found this was true in her case. "I saw that loneliness struck most when I was least busy," she says, "so I concentrated on getting involved with others and helping them to cope with their problems." Helping others brings happiness, and lonely Christians can find plenty to do in the Lord's work.—Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Let Friends Help

The New York Times Magazine describes lonely children as having been hurt by "the wounds of friendlessness." (April 28, 1991) Many lonely people, both young and old, feel friendless. It is a real advantage,

therefore, to have the genuine friendship that the caring Christian congregation provides. Work hard to widen your circle of friends within the congregation, and let them help you in whatever ways they can. That is one thing friends are for—to give support in times of trouble.—Proverbs 17: 17; 18:24.

Be aware, though, that because of your emotional pain, you may actually make it difficult for friends to help you. How? Writer Jeffrey Young explains: "Some lonely people . . . turn potential friends off, either by monopolizing the discussion or by saying things that are obnoxious or inappropriate. One way or another, chronically lonely people tend to sabotage close relationships."—*U.S.News & World Report*, September 17, 1984.

At times, you might make things worse by isolating yourself from other people. Peter, a man in his 50's, did that. After his wife died, he found himself withdrawing from others, even though deep down he wanted their help. "Some days," he says, "I just could not face the company of others, and in time I found myself going out of the reach of people." This can be dangerous. While periods of solitude are beneficial, isolation is damaging. (Proverbs 18:1) Peter realized this. He says: "I got over this eventually, faced up to my situation, and, with the help of my friends, was able to reconstruct my life."

Do not assume, though, that others are under some kind of obligation to help. Try not to become demanding. Happily accept any kindness shown, and express appreciation for it. But also keep in mind this good advice found at Proverbs 25:17: "Make your foot rare at the house of your fellowman, that he may not have his sufficiency

of you and certainly hate you." Frances, who faced deep loneliness when her husband died after 35 years of marriage, feels that such caution is important. "Be reasonable in what you expect," she says, "and do not demand too much of others. Do not be forever on someone's doorstep looking for help."

Jehovah Cares

Even if human friends fail you at times, you can still have Jehovah God as your Friend. Be assured that he does care for you. Keep your confidence in him strong, and continually seek refuge in his protective care. (Psalm 27:10; 91:1, 2; Proverbs 3: 5, 6) The Moabitess Ruth did this and was abundantly blessed. Why, she even became an ancestress of Jesus Christ!—Ruth 2:12; 4:17; Matthew 1:5, 16.

Constantly pray to Jehovah. (Psalm 34:4; 62:7, 8) Margaret found prayer to be a source of great strength in coping with loneliness. She shared in the full-time ministry with her husband until he died when still a young man. "I always found it good to pray aloud and tell Jehovah everything, all my fears and worries," she says. "That helped me get things in the right perspective when loneliness struck. And seeing Jehovah answer those prayers gave me confidence." She benefits greatly from following the apostle Peter's advice: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; while you throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you."—1 Peter 5:6, 7; Psalm 55:22.

A good relationship with Jehovah will help you to retain something often lost by lonely people—self-esteem. When her husband died of cancer, journalist Jeannette Kupfermann wrote of "feelings of low self-



Despite her difficult circumstances, there is no indication that Ruth let loneliness blight her life

His purpose has always been for you, and all humankind, to enjoy good, satisfying companionship. When God created Adam, he said: "It is not good for the man to continue by himself. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him." (Genesis 2:18) And that is what God did when he created Eve, the first woman. If it had not been for satanic rebellion, man and woman and the families they produced would never have experienced loneliness.

Jehovah's temporary permission of wickedness has, of course, allowed loneliness to grow and other suffering to occur. However, keep clearly in mind that this is temporary. The trials of loneliness seem less difficult to bear when viewed in the light of what God will do for you in his new world. In the meantime he will support and comfort you.—Psalm 18:2; Philippians 4:6, 7.

Knowing this can give you strength. When Frances (mentioned earlier) was widowed, she found great comfort in the words of Psalm 4:8, especially at night: "In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for you yourself alone, O Jehovah, make me dwell in security." Meditate on such sentiments as those found in the book of Psalms. Reflect on how God cares for you, as expressed at Psalm 23:1-3.

Do Not Blame God

Above all, do not blame God for your loneliness. Jehovah is not responsible.

SOME WAYS TO FIGHT LONELINESS

- Keep close to Jehovah
- Seek comfort by reading the Bible
- Maintain a positive Christian outlook
- Keep busy in meaningful activity
- Widen your circle of friends
- Make it easy for friends to help
- Do not isolate yourself, but cultivate outgoing love
- Have confidence that Jehovah cares for you

HOW YOU MIGHT HELP THE LONELY

- Provide understanding, warmth, and comfort
- Fill a need for confidential talk
- Persevere in doing the little things that help

do for lonely people that are vitally important. For example, when a fellow believer loses a loved one in death, much good can be accomplished through kind acts of genuine friendship. Do not discount little kindnesses, like an invitation to a meal, a sympathetic ear, or encouraging conversation. These things are very effective in helping a person to combat loneliness.—Hebrews 13:16.

Likely all of us will experience bouts of loneliness from time to time. Yet, loneliness need not become a scourge. Fill your life with meaningful, constructive activities. Let friends help when they can. Have confidence in Jehovah God. Keep close in mind the encouraging promise recorded at Psalm 34:19: “Many are the calamities of the righteous one, but out of them all Jehovah delivers him.” Turn to Jehovah for help, and do not let loneliness blight your life.

In Our Next Issue

The Bible—What Is Its Real Value?

God's Servants—An Organized
and Happy People

Are You Helping Your Child
to Choose Jehovah?

Often, it is the little things that friends



The Source of Unfailing Courage

A HISSING sound caused us to stop dead in our tracks. Then, from a bush to our left, two birds ran toward us with outstretched wings. In front of us, two eggs lay in a small depression in the ground. The birds had prevented us from accidentally treading on their nest. Each time we tried to get closer and take a photograph of the lovely brown-spotted eggs, the birds repeated their threat display. 'How courageous,' we thought.

That was the experience of four adults on approaching the nest of a spotted dikkop. A smaller bird is the blacksmith plover. In the book *Everyone's Guide to South African Birds*, ornithologists Sinclair and Mendelsohn explain: "Breeding pairs protect their nest and young vigorously and become very aggressive at the approach of any intruder. They are undaunted by the size of the

trespasser and fly up calling harshly, fearlessly dive-bombing even humans in an attempt to warn them off."

Some have watched individual large elephants unintentionally walk in the direction of a blacksmith plover's nest, only to set off the bird's display. The elephants usually oblige by making a detour.

Where do birds get such apparent courage? It originates with the One who created them. Jehovah God has programmed these small creatures with instinctive mechanisms to prevent larger animals from doing harm to their nests or young chicks.

A Lesson for Christians

Christians can learn a lesson from this, even though they want to go beyond mere instinctive courage. They are called upon to imitate their Master, Jesus Christ, who fearlessly obeyed God's commandments.

(Hebrews 12:1-3) The Bible condemns cowards who shrink back from serving God. (Hebrews 10:39; Revelation 21:8) At the same time, Jehovah understands our imperfect makeup and knows that we may at times sin or lack the courage needed to do his will fully. (Psalm 103:12-14) What can a person do if fear causes him to hold back from doing what is right?

A Christian must prayerfully turn to God for strength to face trials and keep on doing the divine will. The Bible contains this reassuring promise of Jehovah's help: "He is giving to the tired one power; and to the one without dynamic energy he makes full might abound. Boys will both tire out and grow weary, and young men themselves will without fail stumble, but those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not tire out." (Isaiah 40:29-31) Many imperfect humans have experienced the truth of these words and 'from a weak state have been made powerful.' (Hebrews 11:34) A good example was the Christian apostle Paul, who wrote: "The Lord stood near me and infused power into me, that through me the preaching might be fully accomplished and all the nations might hear it." —2 Timothy 4:17.

Even newly interested persons who want to become followers of Jesus Christ can experience such strengthening aid. Consider a South African man named Henry, who was the treasurer of his church and lived next door to his pastor. Henry was searching for the truth. Despite his attachment to the church, one day he accepted the offer of a free home Bible study with Jehovah's Witnesses. In time, he expressed the desire to become a Witness and asked what steps he had to take to reach that

goal. It was explained that he would first have to resign from his church. (Revelation 18:4) Since the pastor was his neighbor and friend, Henry felt that he could not just write a letter of resignation but would need to explain the matter face-to-face. This he courageously did.

The pastor was shocked and later took the moderator and other members of the church to visit Henry. They wanted to know why he had left their church to become a member of a religion that, according to them, does not have God's holy spirit. "At first, I was afraid to answer them," explained Henry, "because they had always had great influence over me. But I prayed to Jehovah for help, and he enabled me to make this defense: 'Of all international religions, which is the only one that uses God's name, Jehovah? Is it not Jehovah's Witnesses? Do you think God would allow them to bear his name and not also give them his holy spirit?'" The church officials were unable to refute such reasoning. Thankful for the knowledge and strength that God provides, Henry now courageously shares with Jehovah's Witnesses in the door-to-door ministry.

Yes, being a true Christian takes courage. As this world's end draws near, tests of faith will increase. Satan wants to rob God's servants of their wonderful hope of everlasting life by trying to break their integrity to Jehovah. (Compare Revelation 2:10.) But we must never give up. Even if we suffer a temporary setback because of fear, Jehovah can help us to recover. Keep looking to him for strength to keep on doing his will. Remember, he who created fearless birds is the Source of unfailing courage. Indeed, true Christians should "be of good courage and say: 'Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" —Hebrews 13:6.

Are You Learning From Our Grand Instructor?

“I STUDIED law for five years at one of the best universities in Spain,” explained Julio. “But what I learned when I began studying the Bible was far superior. The university taught me how to study; the Bible taught me how to live.”

Through the Bible we have access to God’s thoughts, his principles, and his instructions. The Scriptures describe Jehovah as the “Grand Instructor” because he is the best teacher in the universe. (Isaiah 30:20) Literally, the Hebrew text calls Him “instructors”—a plural indicating excellence. This should remind us that being taught by Jehovah is far superior to studying under any other teacher.

Practical Wisdom From Jehovah

Why is divine teaching so beneficial? First of all, because of its invaluable content. Jehovah’s teaching gives us “practical wisdom.” Moreover, God-given wisdom “preserves alive” those who put it into practice.—Proverbs 3:21, 22; Ecclesiastes 7:12.

The composer of Psalm 119 realized that Jehovah’s wisdom had safeguarded him throughout his life. For instance, he sang: “The law of your mouth is good for me, more so than thousands of pieces of gold and silver. If your law had not been what I am fond of, then I should have perished in my affliction. Wiser than my enemies your commandment makes me, because to time indefinite it is mine. More insight than all my teachers I have come to have, because your reminders are a concern to me.”—Psalm 119:72, 92, 98, 99.

The psalmist is not the only one who would have ‘perished in his affliction,’ were it not for Jehovah’s law. Rosa, a young woman from Spain, is convinced that her life was saved because she applied godly principles. “By the age of 26, I had already attempted to commit suicide twice,” she recalls.

Rosa had become involved in prostitution, as well as alcohol and drug abuse. “One day, when I was at the very depths of despair,” she says, “a Witness couple spoke to me about how the Bible can help us solve our problems. I began to study God’s Word, which I found fascinating. Within a month I had the strength to make a clean, fresh start in life. Now that I had a purpose in life, I no longer needed the crutch of alcohol or drugs. And since I wanted so much to be Jehovah’s friend, I was determined to live by his standards. If it hadn’t been for the practical wisdom of God’s Word, I am sure that by now I would have put an end to my life.”

Truly, wisdom from Jehovah is lifesaving. Therefore, we can benefit not only from the priceless content of divine teaching but also from the means Jehovah uses to instruct his servants. Since God’s Son, Jesus Christ, commanded us to be teachers and disciple-makers, we want to learn the most effective methods of imparting instruction.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

Jehovah’s Use of Illustrations

Mark’s Gospel says that “without an illustration [Jesus] would not speak to them.” (Mark 4:34) This characteristic



Jehovah asked Job: "Is it at your order that an eagle flies upward and that it builds its nest high up?"

By means of a bottle-gourd plant, Jehovah taught Jonah to be more concerned about people

feature of Jesus' teaching is not surprising. He simply imitated one of the ways that Jehovah's prophetic messages were conveyed to the nation of Israel. These contain a number of graphic illustrations.—Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 18:1-11; Ezekiel 15:2-7; Hosea 11:1-4.

Notice, for example, how Jehovah uses a powerful illustration to teach us that idols are useless. Isaiah 44:14-17 states: "There is one whose business is to cut down cedars; and he takes a certain species of tree, even a massive tree . . . He planted the laurel tree, and . . . it has become something for man to keep a fire burning. So he takes part of it that he may warm himself. In fact he builds a fire and actually bakes bread. He also works on a god to which he may bow down. He has made it into a carved image, and he prostrates himself to it. Half of it he actually burns up in a fire. Upon half of it he roasts well the flesh that he eats, and he becomes satisfied. . . . But the remainder of it he actually makes into a god itself, into

his carved image. He prostrates himself to it and bows down and prays to it and says: 'Deliver me, for you are my god.' Illustrations like these are powerful tools in helping honesthearted ones to reject idolatry and false doctrines.

Soul-Searching Questions

The Bible also contains examples of how Jehovah adjusted the thinking of some of his servants by means of thought-provoking questions. The patriarch Job was one of these. Jehovah patiently helped him to evaluate his own littleness in relation to God. This was done by means of a series of questions, which Job was hopelessly unqualified to answer.

"Where did you happen to be when I founded the earth?" Jehovah asked Job. "Who barricaded the sea with doors? . . . Can you tie fast the bonds of the Kimah constellation, or can you loosen the very cords of the Kesil constellation? . . . Do you have an arm like that of the true God?" This humbling interrogation included the very important question: "Will you pronounce me [Jehovah] wicked in order that you may be in the right?"—Job 38:4, 8, 31; 40:8, 9.

These searching questions made Job realize that he had spoken without understanding. Hence, he made a retraction and

repented. (Job 42:6) As in this case, well-chosen questions may help to readjust incorrect thinking on the part of our children or Bible students.

Building Confidence

What if we need to assist someone who feels unworthy or incapable? Helpful in this regard is a conversation between Jehovah and his prophet Moses. When God assigned Moses to be his spokesman before Pharaoh and the Israelites, the prophet felt incapable of handling the task. "I am slow of mouth and slow of tongue," he said. However, God replied: "Who appointed a mouth for man? . . . Is it not I, Jehovah? So now go, and I myself shall prove to be with your mouth and I will teach you what you ought to say."—Exodus 4:10-12.

Jehovah assigned Moses' brother Aaron as his spokesman, and they proceeded to carry out their work in Egypt. (Exodus 4:14-16) Not a few Witnesses of Jehovah have shared Moses' feelings of inadequacy when first engaging in the house-to-house ministry or in street witnessing. As in Moses' case, our knowing that we have Jehovah's backing and that we will be accompanied by an experienced minister can enable us to overcome our hesitancy. Even as Moses was able to cultivate confidence to the point of making the powerful speeches found throughout the Bible book of Deuteronomy, with Jehovah's help we too can build up speaking ability.

An Object Lesson

A sincere desire to help others is also indispensable. That was a quality that the prophet Jonah lacked. Jehovah assigned Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh about the impending destruction of the city. Surprisingly, the Ninevites repented. (Jonah 3:5) As a consequence, Jehovah postponed the calamity. Instead of being overjoyed at

the success of his preaching campaign, however, Jonah felt angry that his prediction would not be fulfilled. How did Jehovah help him get the right perspective?

Jehovah used a bottle-gourd plant to teach Jonah the importance of caring about others. The plant miraculously grew up overnight and provided some welcome shade for Jonah, who had set up a booth on the outskirts of Nineveh. Jonah began to "rejoice greatly" over this humble plant. But then Jehovah caused a worm to strike the plant so that it dried up. Exposed to the sun and to a parching wind, Jonah became angry and said: "My dying off is better than my being alive." (Jonah 4:5-8) What was the lesson in all of this?

Jehovah spoke to Jonah and said: "You, for your part, felt sorry for the bottle-gourd plant, which you did not toil upon or make get big, which proved to be a mere growth of a night and perished as a mere growth of a night. And, for my part, ought I not to feel sorry for Nineveh the great city, in which there exist more than one hundred and twenty thousand men who do not at all know the difference between their right hand and their left, besides many domestic animals?"—Jonah 4:9-11.

What a powerful object lesson! Jonah was more interested in the bottle-gourd plant than in thousands of people. Although concern for any part of God's creation is laudable, helping to save the lives of people is our most important task.

Instructing With Patience

As Jonah discovered, it is not always easy to accomplish our ministry. (2 Timothy 4:5) However, a patient attitude toward others will help.

How do you react when one of your Bible students is slow or somewhat unreasonable? Our Grand Instructor teaches us how

to deal with such a problem. He showed extraordinary patience when Abraham plied him with questions about the impending judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. "Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" Abraham asked. "Suppose there are fifty righteous men in the midst of the city," Abraham pleaded. "Will you, then, sweep them away and not pardon the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are inside it?" Jehovah's answer prompted Abraham to keep pleading until the number was reduced to ten. Jehovah knew that Lot's family alone deserved to be spared, and provision had been made toward that end. But God patiently allowed Abraham to keep questioning him until he grasped the magnitude of Jehovah's mercy.—Genesis 18:20-32.

Jehovah made allowances for Abraham's limited understanding and for his feelings of concern. If we also comprehend our student's limitations, it will help us to show pa-

tience while he struggles to understand a particular doctrine or to overcome an ingrained habit.

Keep On Learning From Jehovah

Jehovah God is unquestionably the Grand Instructor. Through such means as illustrations, questions, and object lessons, he patiently imparts understanding. To the extent that we imitate his teaching methods, we ourselves will become better teachers.

Since those who teach others should not neglect teaching themselves, we must continue to be "taught by Jehovah." (Isaiah 54:13) Isaiah wrote: "Your eyes must become eyes seeing your Grand Instructor. And your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people,' in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left." (Isaiah 30:20, 21) By continuing to walk in Jehovah's way and helping others to do so, we can have the unique privilege of learning from our Grand Instructor forever.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

In these difficult economic times, more and more individuals and companies are resorting to bankruptcy. Is it Scripturally proper for a Christian to file for bankruptcy?

The answer to this question provides a fine illustration of how God's Word offers us practical guidance on matters that may be distinctly modern. Many lands have laws regulating bankruptcy. The laws vary from country to country, and it is not for the Christian congregation to offer legal advice on this. But let us get an overview of the legal provision of bankruptcy.

One reason why governments allow individuals and businesses to declare bankruptcy is that it offers those who lend money or extend credit

(creditors) a measure of protection from people or businesses that borrow money or assume debts (debtors) but do not pay what they owe. For creditors it may seem that the only recourse is to appeal to the courts to have the debtor declared bankrupt so that the debtor's assets could then be distributed as partial payment of the debt.

Another way bankruptcy works is as a safety net for debtors who honestly cannot satisfy their creditors. The debtor may be permitted to file for bankruptcy, whereupon his creditors can take some of his assets. Still, the law may permit him to retain his home or certain minimal assets and then get on with life free of the *continued threat* of loss or seizure by his former creditors.

It is evident, then, that these laws are intended to offer a degree of protection to both sides in financial or business transactions. Let us, though, note what helpful counsel the Bible offers.

It would be hard for one to read the Bible from cover to cover without sensing that it does not encourage going into debt. We find such warnings as Proverbs 22:7: "The rich is the one that rules over those of little means, and the borrower is servant to the man doing the lending."

Recall, too, Jesus' illustration at Matthew 18:23-34 involving a slave who had a very large debt. "His master ordered him and his wife and his children and all the things he had to be sold," but then the master, a king, relented and showed mercy. When that slave later proved unmerciful, the king ordered him 'delivered to the jailers, until he should pay back all that was owing.' Obviously, the best course, the recommended course, is to avoid borrowing money.

God's servants in ancient Israel had business dealings, and sometimes borrowing and lending occurred. What did Jehovah instruct them to do? If a person wanted to borrow money to enter into or to expand a business, it was legal and normal for a Hebrew to charge interest. God urged his people, however, to be unselfish when lending to a needy Israelite; they were not to profit from an adverse situation by charging interest. (Exodus 22:25) Deuteronomy 15:7, 8 says: "In case some one of your brothers becomes poor . . . , you should generously open your hand to him and by all means lend him on pledge as much as he needs, which he is in want of."

Similar kindness or consideration was reflected in the regulations stipulating that creditors could not seize the necessities of life from a debtor, such as the family's grindstone or a garment needed to keep the person warm at night.—Deuteronomy 24:6, 10-13; Ezekiel 18:5-9.

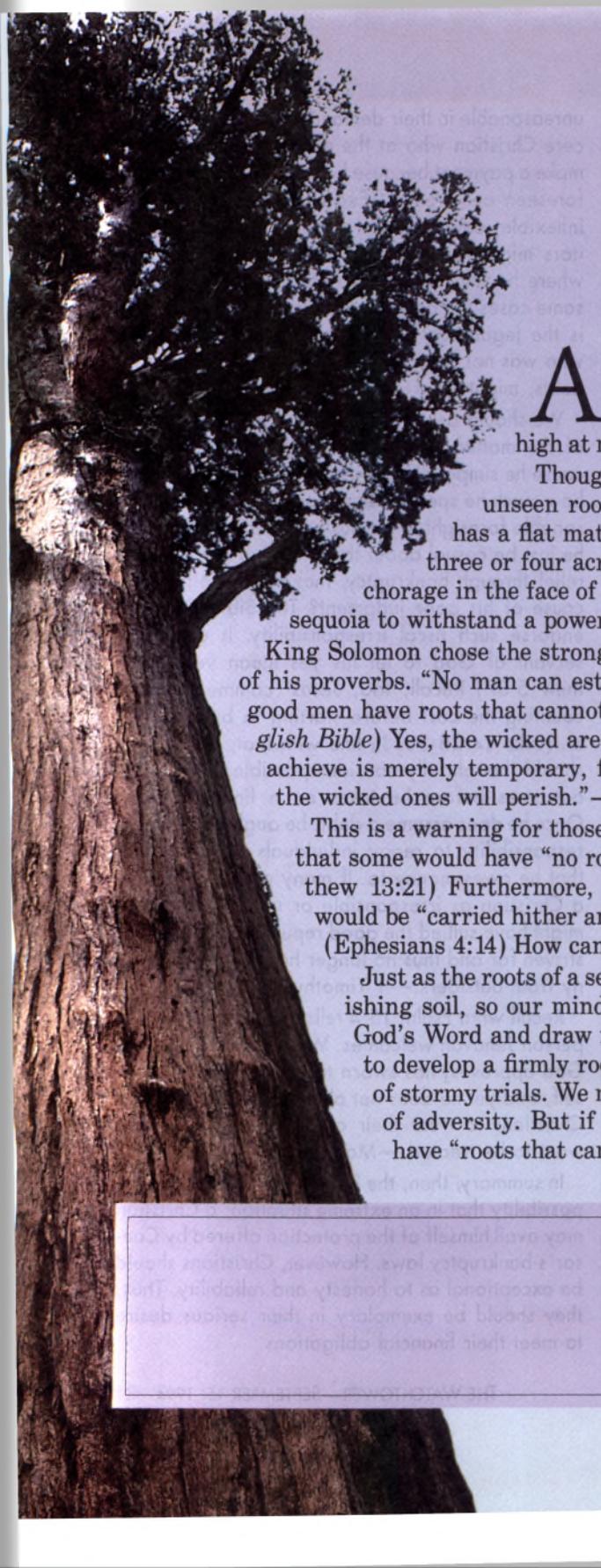
Of course, not all Jews accepted and applied the spirit of these loving laws from their great Judge and Statute-giver. (Isaiah 33:22) Some greedy Jews treated their brothers very harshly. Today, too, some creditors might be harsh and

unreasonable in their demands, even toward a sincere Christian who at the moment was unable to make a payment because he experienced some unforeseen occurrence. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) By their inflexible, demanding pressure, the worldly creditors might force such a debtor into a situation where he felt he had to protect himself. How? In some cases the only thing creditors will recognize is the legal step of bankruptcy. So a Christian, who was not being greedy or negligent about his debts, might resort to filing for bankruptcy.

We should be aware, though, of the other side of the matter. A Christian might be in debt because he simply did not use self-control in what or how much he spent or because he did not use reasonable foresight in his business decisions. Should he just be casual about the debt and quickly seek relief through bankruptcy, thus hurting others because of his poor judgment? The Bible does not endorse such fiscal irresponsibility. It urges the servant of God to let his yes mean yes. (Matthew 5:37) Recall, too, Jesus' comments about counting the cost before starting to build a tower. (Luke 14:28-30) In line with that, a Christian should thoughtfully consider possible undesirable outcomes before he takes on a financial debt. Once he does assume a debt, he ought to sense his responsibility to repay individuals or companies that he owes money to. If many others perceived a Christian as irresponsible or untrustworthy, he might have sullied the good reputation that he had striven for and thus no longer have a fine testimony from outsiders.—1 Timothy 3:2, 7.

Recall what Psalm 15:4 tells us about the sort of person Jehovah welcomes. We read: "He [the one God approves] has sworn to what is bad for himself, and yet he does not alter." Yes, God expects Christians to treat their creditors as they would want to be treated.—Matthew 7:12.

In summary, then, the Bible does not rule out the possibility that in an extreme situation, a Christian may avail himself of the protection offered by Caesar's bankruptcy laws. However, Christians should be exceptional as to honesty and reliability. Thus, they should be exemplary in their serious desire to meet their financial obligations.



“Roots That Cannot Be Dislodged”

AMONG the world's largest and oldest living things are the sequoia trees of California. These towering marvels stand some 300 feet high at maturity and can live upwards of 3,000 years. Though the sight of a sequoia is awe-inspiring, its unseen root system is equally impressive. The sequoia has a flat mat of roots that may cover an area as large as three or four acres. This huge root system provides solid anchorage in the face of floods or high winds. It is even possible for a sequoia to withstand a powerful earthquake!

King Solomon chose the strong root system of a tree as a metaphor in one of his proverbs. “No man can establish himself by wickedness,” he said, “but good men have roots that cannot be dislodged.” (*Proverbs 12:3, The New English Bible*) Yes, the wicked are on shaky ground. Any success they seem to achieve is merely temporary, for Jehovah promises that “the very hope of the wicked ones will perish.”—*Proverbs 10:28*.

This is a warning for those who profess to be Christians, for Jesus said that some would have “no root” in themselves and would stumble. (*Matthew 13:21*) Furthermore, the apostle Paul wrote about persons who would be “carried hither and thither by every wind of [false] teaching.” (*Ephesians 4:14*) How can this be prevented?

Just as the roots of a sequoia spread expansively in the earth's nourishing soil, so our minds and hearts need to delve expansively into God's Word and draw from its life-giving waters. This will help us to develop a firmly rooted faith. Of course, we will feel the effects of stormy trials. We may even tremble, like a tree, in the presence of adversity. But if our faith is well grounded, we will prove to have “roots that cannot be dislodged.”—Compare *Hebrews 6:19*.

“...and the roots of the trees were deepened, and the mountain had a voice, saying, ‘I am thy son, I was born of thee, I am thy son, I was born of thee.’” (Ezra 9:14)

“...and the roots of the trees were deepened, and the mountain had a voice, saying, ‘I am thy son, I was born of thee, I am thy son, I was born of thee.’” (Ezra 9:14)