

# THE WATCHTOWER

## ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



### STUDY ARTICLES

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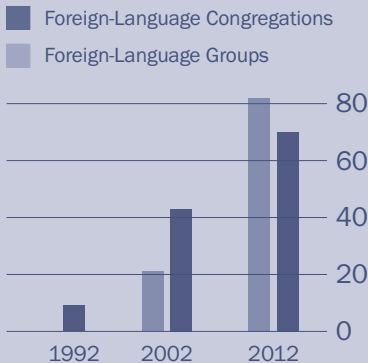
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## LONDON, ENGLAND

**COVER:** Using literature in Gujarati, sisters witness to a shopkeeper in northwest London



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## STUDY ARTICLES

### ■ Fulfill Your Role as an Evangelizer

What does it mean to be an evangelizer? This article answers that question and shows why people need the good news. It also explains how we can be successful in fulfilling our role as evangelizers.

### ■ Are You “Zealous for Fine Works”?

This article considers two ways in which our being “zealous for fine works” attracts people to God. (Titus 2:14) One way is through our preaching activity. The other is by our godly conduct.

### ■ Strengthen Your Marriage Through Good Communication

### ■ Parents, Children—Communicate With Love

Good communication is essential for a couple to have a happy marriage and an enjoyable family life. The first article identifies qualities that can help us to communicate well. The second article shows what can be done to overcome barriers to communication between parents and children.

### ■ Safeguard Your Inheritance by Making Wise Choices

What spiritual inheritance is set before Christians? What can we learn about our inheritance from the warning example of Esau? Taking what measures will help us to make wise choices regarding our inheritance? These questions are answered in this article.



# FULFILL YOUR ROLE AS AN EVANGELIZER

AN EVANGELIZER is someone who tells good news. The first and foremost Evangelizer is Jehovah God. Immediately after the rebellion of our first parents, Jehovah announced the good news that the serpent—actually, Satan the Devil—will be destroyed. (Gen. 3:15) Throughout the centuries, Jehovah inspired faithful men to write down details about how his name will be cleared of reproach, how the damage caused by Satan will be undone, and how humans can regain the opportunities forfeited by Adam and Eve.

<sup>2</sup> Angels too are evangelizers. They themselves tell good news, and they assist others in spreading good news. (Luke 1:19; 2:10; Acts 8:26, 27, 35; Rev. 14:6) What about the archangel Michael? While on earth as Jesus, he set the standard for human evangelizers. Why, Jesus built his life around spreading the good news!—Luke 4:16-21.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus commanded his disciples to be evangelizers. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8) The apostle Paul urged his coworker Timothy: “Do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplish your ministry.” (2 Tim. 4:5) What is the good news that we as Jesus’ followers spread? It includes the reassuring truth that our heavenly Father, Jehovah, loves us. (John 3:16; 1 Pet. 5:7) A key way that Jehovah God expresses his love is through his Kingdom. Therefore, we gladly tell others that all who submit to Kingdom rule, obey God, and do what is righteous can have a relationship with him as his friends. (Ps. 15:1, 2) In fact, it is Jehovah’s purpose

1. Why can Jehovah be called the first and foremost Evangelizer?
2. (a) What part do angels play in connection with the evangelizing work? (b) What standard did Jesus set for evangelizers?
3. (a) What is the good news that we spread? (b) What questions are of interest to us as evangelizers?

*“Do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplish your ministry.”—2 TIM. 4:5.*

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What is an evangelizer?

Why do people need to hear the good news?

What do successful evangelizers do?

to do away with all unjust suffering. He will also remove the pain caused by memories of past suffering. What good news! (Isa. 65:17) Since we are evangelizers, let us consider the answers to two important questions: Why is it vital that people hear the good news today? And how can we successfully fulfill our role as evangelizers?

### WHY DO PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR THE GOOD NEWS?

<sup>4</sup> Imagine being told that your father has abandoned you as well as the rest of your family. Suppose those who claimed to know him say that he was aloof, secretive, and cruel. Some might even have you believe that it is no use trying to reestablish contact with your father because he is dead. In effect, many are told similar stories about God. They are taught that God is a mystery, that he is unknowable, or that he is cruel. For example, some religious leaders claim that God will punish bad people forever in a place of torment. Others attribute to God the suffering caused by natural disasters. Although these events kill good people as well as bad, they are said to be punishment from God.

<sup>5</sup> Others assert that God does not exist. In this regard, consider the theory of evolution. Many who champion it declare that life came about without any intelligent direction. They claim that there is no Creator. Some have even said that a human is just another animal, so it should come as no surprise when a person acts in an animalistic fashion. They argue that the strong who cruelly

dominate the weak are just following so-called laws of nature. So it is not surprising that many believe that injustice will always be with us. Therefore, those who put faith in evolution are robbed of true hope.

<sup>6</sup> Without doubt, the theory of evolution and false doctrines have contributed to the misery that mankind has experienced during the last days. (Rom. 1:28-31; 2 Tim. 3:1-5) These human teachings have brought no real and lasting good news. Instead, as the apostle Paul notes, they have left people “in darkness mentally, and alienated from the life that belongs to God.” (Eph. 4:17-19) In addition, the theory of evolution and false doctrines have hindered people from accepting the good news originating with God.—*Read Ephesians 2:11-13.*

<sup>7</sup> To become reconciled to God, people must first be convinced that Jehovah exists and that there are good reasons for drawing close to him. We can help them to gain that knowledge by encouraging them to examine creation. When people study creation with an open mind, they learn of God’s wisdom and power. (Rom. 1:19, 20) In an effort to help people develop a sense of awe when they think about what our Grand Creator has accomplished, we can use the two brochures *Was Life Created?* and *The Origin of Life—Five Questions Worth Asking*. Even so, those who learn only from creation will not find answers to some of life’s most perplexing questions, such as these: Why does God allow suffering? What is God’s purpose for the earth? Does God care about me as an individual?

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4. What untrue stories are people sometimes told regarding God?

5, 6. How have the theory of evolution and false doctrines affected people?

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7, 8. What is the only way that people can fully grasp the good news?



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## To reach the heart of our listeners, we must persuade them

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<sup>8</sup> The only way that people can fully grasp the good news about God and his purpose is by studying the Bible. What a privilege we have to help people find answers to their questions! To reach the heart of our listeners, though, we need to do more than inform them of facts; we must persuade them. (2 Tim. 3:14) We can become more persuasive by following Jesus' example. Why was he so successful? One reason is that he used questions effectively. How can we imitate him?

### SUCCESSFUL EVANGELIZERS USE QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY

<sup>9</sup> Why should we, like Jesus, use questions in the evangelizing work? Well, consider this scenario: Your doctor tells you that he has good news. He can cure your illness if you undergo serious surgery. You might believe him. But what if he makes that promise even before he asks you any questions about your health? Then it is unlikely that you will have confidence in him. No matter how talented the doctor may be, he needs to ask questions and listen to what your symptoms are before he can give any meaningful help. Similarly, if we are to help people accept the good news of the Kingdom, we must master the art of asking effective questions. Only after we gain a clear picture of their spiritual condition can we assist them.

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**9.** If we are to help people in a spiritual way, what must we do?

<sup>10</sup> Jesus knew that well-chosen questions not only help a teacher learn about a student but also get the listener involved in the discussion. For example, when Jesus wanted to teach his disciples a lesson in humility, he first put a thought-provoking question to them. (Mark 9:33) To teach Peter how to reason on principles, Jesus asked him a multiple-choice question. (Matt. 17:24-26) On another occasion, when Jesus wanted to draw up what was in the heart of his disciples, he asked a series of viewpoint questions. (**Read Matthew 16:13-17.**) By using questions and making statements, Jesus did more than impart facts. He touched hearts, motivating people to act in harmony with the good news.

<sup>11</sup> When we imitate Jesus by using questions effectively, we do at least three things. We discover how we can best help people, we overcome potential conversation stoppers, and we teach humble ones how they can benefit themselves. Consider three scenarios showing how we can use questions to good effect.

<sup>12</sup> *Scenario 1:* As a parent, what would you do if your teenage child expressed concern about being able to defend his belief in creation when talking with a classmate? No doubt you would want to help him to be confident about sharing the good news. So rather than criticizing him or immediately offering advice, why not imitate Jesus' example and ask some viewpoint questions? How could you do so?

<sup>13</sup> After reading with your child portions from the brochure *The Origin of*

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**10, 11.** What may we be able to accomplish by imitating Jesus' way of teaching?

**12-14.** How can you help a child to be more confident about sharing the good news? Give an example.

## Effective questions . . .



*Life—Five Questions Worth Asking*, you could ask what arguments he finds most thought provoking. Encourage him to discover his own reasons why he is persuaded to believe in a Creator and why he wants to do God’s will. (Rom. 12:2) Let your child know that his reasons do not have to be exactly the same as yours.

<sup>14</sup> Explain to your child that when talking with a classmate, your youngster could follow the pattern you have demonstrated. That is, he could review some facts and then ask leading or viewpoint questions. For instance, a classmate could be asked to read the box on page 21 of the *Origin of Life* brochure. Your child could then ask, “Is it true that the capacity of DNA for storing information still has no parallel in today’s computer age?” The classmate will likely answer yes. Then your child could ask, “If human computer technicians cannot achieve such results, how could mindless matter do so on its own?” To help your child become more comfortable when conversing with others about his faith, you can regularly conduct practice sessions with him. If you train him to use questions effectively, you will help him to fulfill his role as an evangelizer.

<sup>15</sup> *Scenario 2:* In our witnessing work, we meet those who doubt that God exists. For example, a person might tell us that he is an atheist. Instead of letting that comment stop the conversation, we could respectfully ask how long he has been an atheist and what caused him to adopt that view. After listening to his answers and complimenting him on giving the matter serious thought, we could ask if he felt that it would be wrong to read material that presented evidence that life was created. If the household-

**15.** How might we use questions in an effort to help an atheist?

er is open-minded, he would likely say that it would be unreasonable to refuse to look at such evidence. We could then offer him either the brochure *Was Life Created?* or the one entitled *The Origin of Life—Five Questions Worth Asking*. Tactful questions, kindly asked, can act as a key that opens a person's heart to the good news.

<sup>16</sup> *Scenario 3*: When conducting a Bible study, we might simply have the student repeat answers printed in a Bible study aid. If we do so, however, we could stunt the spiritual growth of the student. Why? Because a student who repeats answers without meditating on them is unlikely to grow deep spiritual roots. He could easily end up being like a plant that withers under the heat of opposition. (Matt. 13:20, 21) To help avoid that outcome, we need to ask our student how he feels about what he is learning. Try to discover if he agrees with the points made. More important, have him say why he agrees or disagrees. Then help him to reason on the Scriptures so that he will eventually be able to arrive at correct conclusions by himself. (Heb. 5:14) If we use questions effectively, individuals we teach are more likely to be solidly rooted in the faith and to be able to resist the efforts of those who would oppose or mislead them. (Col. 2:6-8) What else can we do to fulfill our role as evangelizers?

### SUCCESSFUL EVANGELIZERS ASSIST ONE ANOTHER

<sup>17</sup> Jesus sent his disciples out in the preaching work by twos. (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1) Later, the apostle Paul mentioned

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<sup>16</sup>. Why should we not settle for having a Bible student read answers from a Bible study aid?

<sup>17, 18</sup>. When accompanying someone in the ministry, how can we work as a team?

“fellow workers” who had “striven side by side with [him] in the good news.” (Phil. 4:3) In harmony with that Scriptural precedent, in 1953, Kingdom publishers began a program of training others in the ministry.

<sup>18</sup> When you accompany another Christian in the ministry, how can you work as a team? (**Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.**) In your Bible, look up the scriptures that your partner is using. Keep your attention turned to your partner and to the householder when either of them is talking. Follow the discussion closely in case there is a need for you to assist your partner to overcome an objection. (Eccl. 4:12) A word of caution, though: Resist the urge to interrupt your partner when he or she is using an effective line of reasoning. Your unrestrained enthusiasm might discourage your partner and confuse the householder. At times, it may be appropriate to join in the discussion. But if you choose to say something, limit yourself to a brief comment or two. Then allow your partner to resume the lead.

<sup>19</sup> How can you and your partner assist each other while walking from door to door? Why not use the time to discuss ways that your presentation might be improved? Be careful that your comments about those living in your territory are not discouraging. Likewise, avoid the trap of harping on the negative traits of fellow evangelizers. (Prov. 18:24) We do well to remember that we are earthen vessels. Jehovah has shown us extraordinary kindness by entrusting us with the treasure of the ministry of the good news. (**Read 2 Corinthians 4:1, 7.**) So let all of us show appreciation for that treasure by doing our best to fulfill our role as evangelizers.

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<sup>19</sup>. What do we do well to remember, and why?





*“Christ Jesus . . . gave himself for us that he might . . . cleanse for himself a people peculiarly his own, zealous for fine works.”—TITUS 2:13, 14.*

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#### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

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Why do you consider it an honor to be zealous for fine works?

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How does Daniel 2:41-45 underscore the need for being zealous in the ministry?

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Explain how godly conduct attracts people to true worship and to Jehovah God.

## ARE YOU “ZEALOUS FOR FINE WORKS”?

MANY consider it a great honor to be given an award for a notable achievement. For instance, some have received the Nobel Prize for acting zealously to establish peace between hostile or alienated parties. But how much greater an honor it is to be sent by God as an ambassador or envoy to help people establish peaceful relations with their Creator!

<sup>2</sup> As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we bear that singular honor. Under the command of God and Christ, we beg people to “become reconciled to God.” (2 Cor. 5:20) We are being used by Jehovah to draw people to him. This is how millions in over 235 lands have been helped to enjoy good relations with God and thus have the hope of gaining everlasting life. (Titus 2:11) With heartfelt zeal, we invite “anyone that wishes [to] take life’s water free.” (Rev. 22:17) Because we cherish this precious assignment and carry it out diligently, we may rightly be called a people “zealous for fine works.” (Titus 2:14) Let us now consider how our zeal for fine works helps us to draw people to Jehovah. One way is by means of our preaching activity.

#### IMITATE THE ZEAL OF JEHOVAH AND JESUS

<sup>3</sup> Referring to what the rulership of God’s Son will accomplish, Isaiah 9:7 says: “The very zeal of Jehovah of armies will do this.” Those words emphasize our heavenly Father’s active interest in the salvation of mankind. Jehovah’s example of zeal clearly indicates that our God-given work as Kingdom proclaimers deserves our wholehearted support, our enthusiasm, our zeal. Our burning desire to help people get to know God is a reflection of Jehovah’s zeal. As God’s fellow workers, then, are we personally determined to have the fullest share in proclaiming

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1, 2. What singular honor do Jehovah’s Witnesses have, and how do you feel about it?

3. Of what does “the very zeal of Jehovah” assure us?



the good news that our circumstances will permit?—1 Cor. 3:9.

<sup>4</sup> Consider, too, Jesus' zeal. He set a perfect example of zealous perseverance in the ministry. Despite bitter opposition, he maintained his zeal for the preaching work right to the painful end of his earthly life. (John 18:36, 37) As the time for his sacrificial death drew near, Jesus' determination to help others come to know Jehovah intensified.

<sup>5</sup> In the fall of 32 C.E., for example, Jesus gave the illustration of a man who had in his vineyard a fig tree that bore no fruit for three years. Upon being told to cut the tree down, the vinedresser requested time to fertilize it. (**Read Luke 13:6-9.**) Only a small number of disciples could then be counted as fruitage of Jesus' preaching work. But as indicated in that illustration of the vinedresser, Jesus used the short time remaining—about six months—to intensify his preaching activity in Judea and Perea. A few days before his death, Jesus wept for his fellow countrymen who "heard without response." —Matt. 13:15; Luke 19:41.

<sup>6</sup> In view of how deep we are in the time of the end, is it not vital to intensify our preaching efforts? (**Read Daniel 2:41-45.**) What a wonderful privilege it is to be Jehovah's Witnesses! We are the only people on earth who offer hope of real solutions to mankind's problems. A newspaper columnist recently described as *unanswerable* the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" It is our Christian duty and privilege to share the Bible's answers to such questions

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4. How did Jesus set the example of zealous perseverance in the ministry?

5. How did Jesus act in harmony with his illustration of the fig tree?

6. Why should we intensify our activity in the ministry?

with all those willing to listen. We have every reason to be "aglow with the spirit" as we carry out our divine commission. (Rom. 12:11) With God's blessing, our zealous evangelizing can help others come to know and love Jehovah.

### A SPIRIT OF SELF-SACRIFICE HONORS JEHOVAH

<sup>7</sup> As indicated by the experiences of the apostle Paul, our ministry may result in "sleepless nights" and "times without food." (2 Cor. 6:5) These expressions paint a vivid picture of self-sacrifice and may well remind us of pioneers who give their ministry first place in life while supporting themselves financially. Consider, too, our devoted missionaries 'who pour themselves out like a drink offering' to serve people in foreign lands. (Phil. 2:17) What about our hardworking elders who miss meals or lose sleep to care for Jehovah's sheep? We also have our older ones and those in poor health who do their best to attend Christian meetings and participate in the field service. Our hearts swell with appreciation when we think of all these self-sacrificing servants of God. Such efforts affect how others view our ministry.

<sup>8</sup> In a letter to the Lincolnshire *Boston Target*, United Kingdom, a non-Witness reader said: "People are losing their faith in religions . . . What do these church ministers do all day? They certainly do not go out like Christ did and meet the people . . . The only religion that seems to care are the Jehovah's Witnesses, who go out and meet people and are genuinely involved in preaching the truth." In this world saturated with self-indulgence, our self-sacrificing

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7, 8. How does a spirit of self-sacrifice honor Jehovah?



Your very presence in the ministry gives a powerful witness to observers

spirit does much to honor Jehovah God. —Rom. 12:1.

<sup>9</sup> What can we do, however, if we seem to be losing our zeal for the ministry? It will be helpful to reflect on what Jehovah is accomplishing by means of the preaching work. (***Read Romans 10:13-15.***) Salvation depends on calling upon Jehovah's name in faith, but people will not do that unless we preach to them. Realizing this should motivate us to remain zealous for fine works and to be diligent in proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom.

#### **FINE CONDUCT ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO GOD**

<sup>10</sup> As important as it is for the ministry, zeal alone is not enough to draw peo-

9. What can stimulate us to remain zealous for fine works in our ministry?

10. Why can it be said that our fine conduct draws people to Jehovah?

ple to God. The second element of zealous works that attracts people to God is fine Christian conduct. Paul emphasized the importance of our conduct when he wrote: "In no way are we giving any cause for stumbling, that our ministry might not be found fault with." (2 Cor. 6:3) Our wholesome speech and upright conduct adorn the teaching of God, making the worship of Jehovah attractive to others. (Titus 2:10) In fact, we often hear of positive results when sincere people observe our Christlike conduct.

<sup>11</sup> Although we recognize that our actions can influence people for good, the opposite is also possible. So whether we are at work, at home, or in school, we seek to avoid giving anyone a basis for finding fault with our ministry and our conduct. If we were to practice sin willfully, the personal consequences

11. Why should we prayerfully consider the effects of our conduct?

would be disastrous. (Heb. 10:26, 27) This thought should move us to consider prayerfully what we are doing and what our lives tell others. As this world's moral standards decline, sincere people will increasingly "see the distinction . . . between one serving God and one who has not served him." (Mal. 3:18) Yes, our fine Christian conduct plays an important role in reconciling people to God.

<sup>12</sup> Writing to the Corinthians, Paul pointed out that he had suffered tribulations, difficulties, beatings, and imprisonment. (*Read 2 Corinthians 6:4, 5.*) When we experience tests of faith, our endurance can help observers to accept the truth. To illustrate: Some years ago, there was an attempt to eliminate Jehovah's Witnesses in an area of Angola. Two baptized Witnesses and 30 interested individuals who were attending our meetings were rounded up. Then the local people were gathered to watch as the opposers whipped these innocent victims until they bled. Even women and children were not spared the cruelty. The intention was to intimidate people so that nobody would listen to Jehovah's Witnesses. But after the public whipping, many members of the community approached the Witnesses and requested home Bible studies! Thereafter, the Kingdom-preaching work moved forward, resulting in notable increases and many blessings.

<sup>13</sup> This example illustrates the far-reaching effect that our firm stand for Bible principles can have on others. We may wonder how many were reconciled to God because of the courageous stand taken by Peter and the other apostles. (Acts 5:17-29) In our case, fellow stu-

dents, workmates, or members of our family may respond favorably when they see the stand we take for what is right.

<sup>14</sup> At any given time, some of our brothers are experiencing persecution. For instance, in Armenia, approximately 40 brothers are in prison because of their neutrality, with dozens more likely to be imprisoned in the coming months. In Eritrea, 55 servants of Jehovah are imprisoned, some over 60 years of age. In South Korea, about 700 Witnesses are in prison for their faith. This situation has gone on there for 60 years. Let us pray that the faithfulness of our persecuted brothers in various lands will bring glory to God and help lovers of righteousness to take their stand for true worship.—Ps. 76:8-10.

<sup>15</sup> The fact that we lead an honest life may also attract people to the truth. (*Read 2 Corinthians 6:4, 7.*) For example, consider this experience: A sister was putting money into a ticket machine on a bus when an acquaintance told her that there was no need to pay for a ticket, as the ride was so short. The sister explained that it was right to pay for the ticket, even for just one stop. After that, her friend got off the bus. At that, the bus driver turned to the sister and asked, "Are you one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" "Yes," she replied. "What made you ask?" "I heard your conversation about paying for the bus ticket, and I know that Jehovah's Witnesses are among the very few people who do so and are honest in all things." A few months later, a man approached the sister at a meeting and said, "Do you know me? I'm the bus driver who talked to you about paying for the ticket. Observing

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**12-14.** How does the way we endure tests of faith affect how others view our ministry? Give an example.

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**15.** Illustrate how an honest way of life can attract others to the truth.



Your honesty and hard work do not go unnoticed

your conduct, I decided to begin studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses." Our reputation for honesty recommends us as trustworthy ministers.

#### ALWAYS DISPLAY QUALITIES THAT HONOR GOD

<sup>16</sup> We also play a part in drawing people to Jehovah when we display such qualities as long-suffering, love, and kindness. Some who observe us may desire to learn about Jehovah, his purposes, and his people. The attitude and conduct of true Christians stand in sharp contrast with the mere outward show of godly devotion of those whose worship is often no more than a hypocritical ploy. Some religious leaders have become wealthy by defrauding their flocks, using much of the money thus obtained to acquire expensive homes and automobiles—and in one case, an air-conditioned dog kennel. Indeed, many who claim to be followers of Christ have no inclination to

**16.** Why do such qualities as long-suffering, love, and kindness touch people's hearts? Give an example.

"give free." (Matt. 10:8) Instead, like the wayward priests of ancient Israel, they "instruct just for a price"—and much of what they teach is unscriptural. (Mic. 3: 11) Such hypocritical conduct does not reconcile anyone to God.

<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, hearts are touched by genuine Christian teachings and good deeds done to neighbors. For instance, while preaching from door to door on one occasion, a pioneer was quickly dismissed by an elderly widow. She said that when he rang the doorbell, she was on a stepladder in the kitchen, trying to replace a lightbulb. "It isn't safe for you to be doing that alone," he said. The pioneer then changed the bulb and went on his way. When the woman's son learned about what had happened, he was so impressed that he tried to find the brother in order to express his appreciation. Eventually, the son accepted a Bible study.

<sup>18</sup> Why are you determined to persevere in fine works? Perhaps because you know that when we manifest zeal for our ministry and do things in keeping with God's will, we honor Jehovah and may help others to gain salvation. (*Read 1 Corinthians 10:31-33.*) Zeal for fine works in preaching the good news and conducting ourselves in a godly way springs from a deep desire to demonstrate love for God and for fellow humans. (Matt. 22:37-39) If we are zealous for fine works, we will be richly rewarded with joy and satisfaction now. Moreover, we can look forward to the day when all mankind will display zeal for true worship in honor of our Creator, Jehovah.

**17, 18.** (a) How do we bring honor to Jehovah when we reflect his qualities in our life? (b) What motivates you to persevere in fine works?



## *Did the Israelites execute criminals by hanging them on stakes?*

■ Many nations in ancient times executed certain criminals by impaling them on a stake or a pole. The Romans tied or nailed such an individual to the instrument of execution, where he might have continued living for several days before his physical endurance was overcome by pain, thirst, hunger, and exposure to the elements. The Romans considered impalement to be a shameful punishment reserved for criminals of the lowest order.

What about the ancient nation of Israel? Did the Israelites execute criminals by hanging them on stakes? The Mosaic Law stipulated: "In case there comes to be in a man a sin deserving the sentence of death, and he has been put to death, and you have hung him upon a stake, his dead body should not stay all night on the stake; but you should by all means bury him on that day." (Deut. 21: 22, 23) Evidently, therefore, during the time of the Hebrew Scriptures, a person who deserved to die was first put to death and then hung on a stake or a tree.

In this regard, Leviticus 20:2 states: "Any man of the sons of Israel, and any alien resident who resides as an alien in Israel, who gives any of his offspring to Molech, should be put to death without fail. The people of the land should pelt him to death with stones." Those in whom there was "a mediumistic spirit or spirit of prediction" were also to be put to death. How? By 'pelting them with stones.'—Lev. 20:27.

At Deuteronomy 22:23, 24, we read: "In case there happened to be a virgin girl engaged to a man, and a man actually found her in the city and lay down with her, you must also bring them both out to the gate of that city and pelt them with stones, and they must die, the girl for the reason that she did not scream in the city, and the man for the reason that he humiliated the wife of his fellowman.

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Evidently, during the time of the Hebrew Scriptures, a person who deserved to die was first put to death and then hung on a stake or a tree

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So you must clear away what is evil from your midst." Among the early Israelites, then, stoning was the principal method of executing those guilty of an atrocious crime.\*

Deuteronomy 21:23 states that "something accursed of God is the one hung up." The public display of the corpse of a vile person "accursed of God" would surely have had an effect on the Israelites. Indeed, hanging the body of such an executed individual on a stake or a tree served as a warning to others.

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\* Many scholars agree that under the Law, a criminal was executed *before* his body was hung on a stake. However, there is evidence that by the first century, some criminals were impaled alive by the Jews and died on the stake.



# STRENGTHEN YOUR MARRIAGE THROUGH GOOD COMMUNICATION

*“As apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time for it.”*

—PROV. 25:11.

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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How does displaying insight improve communication in marriage?

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Why do marriage mates need to show respect for each other?

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What effect can cultivating humility have on a marriage?

“I WOULD rather spend time with my wife than with anyone else,” said a brother in Canada. “Any happiness in life is multiplied and any pain is halved when I share it with her.” A husband in Australia wrote: “In our 11 years together, not one day has passed when I have not spoken with my wife. She and I have no insecurities or concerns about the strength of our marriage. Frequent and meaningful communication is a prime reason for this.” A sister in Costa Rica stated: “Good communication has not only enriched our marriage; it has drawn us closer to Jehovah, protected us from temptations, united us as a couple, and made our love grow.”

<sup>2</sup> Do you and your spouse enjoy pleasant communication, or do you find meaningful conversation to be a challenge? Understandably, difficult situations may arise, for marriage unites two imperfect people who have different personalities, including traits that reflect their culture and upbringing. (Rom. 3: 23) Moreover, a couple may have different communication styles. It is not without reason that marriage researchers John M. Gottman and Nan Silver state: “It takes courage, determination, and resiliency to maintain a long-lasting relationship.”

<sup>3</sup> A successful marriage is, indeed, the product of hard work. But the results include immeasurable happiness. Mates who love each other can truly enjoy their life together. (Eccl. 9:9) Consider the loving marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. (Gen. 24:67) Even after they had spent some time together as husband

1. How has good communication helped marriages?
2. What factors can work against good communication?
3. What has helped couples to strengthen their marriage?

and wife, there is no indication that their affection for each other had waned. The same can be said of many couples today. Their secret? They have learned to convey their thoughts and feelings to each other honestly, yet kindly, by cultivating and displaying insight, love, deep respect, and humility. As we shall now see, when these fundamental qualities characterize a marriage, the lines of communication are always open.

### SHOW INSIGHT

<sup>4</sup> “He that is showing insight in a matter will find good,” says Proverbs 16:20. That certainly is true in connection with marriage and family life. (**Read Proverbs 24:3.**) The best source of insight and wisdom is God’s Word. Genesis 2:18 tells us that God made the woman to be a complement to the man, not a copy of him. Her role is reflected in the way she communicates. Of course, individuals vary, but women generally like to talk about their feelings, people, and relationships. They appreciate warm, intimate communication, for it reassures them that they are loved. On the other hand, many men are less inclined to discuss their feelings and are more likely to talk about activities, problems, and solutions. And men desire to be respected.

<sup>5</sup> “My husband wants to solve problems quickly rather than hear me out,” remarked a sister in Britain. “This can be really frustrating, when all I want is ‘tea and sympathy.’” A husband wrote: “When my wife and I were first married, my tendency was to find a quick solution to whatever problem she had. However, I soon learned that what she really wanted was a listening ear.” (Prov. 18:13; Jas.

1:19) An insightful husband takes note of his wife’s feelings and tries to adapt his approach accordingly. At the same time, he reassures her that her thoughts and feelings are important to him. (1 Pet. 3:7) In turn, she tries to understand his viewpoint. When a husband and wife understand, appreciate, and fulfill their Scriptural roles, their union is a thing of beauty. Moreover, they are able to work together in making and carrying out wise and balanced decisions.

<sup>6</sup> An insightful couple also know that there is “a time to keep quiet and a time to speak.” (Eccl. 3:1, 7) “I now realize that there are times when raising an issue is not appropriate,” observed a sister who has been married for ten years. “If my husband is overwhelmed with work or other responsibilities, I let a little time pass before I raise certain matters. Our conversations are much smoother as a result.” Discerning wives also speak graciously, aware that a well-chosen word “spoken at *the right time for it*” is both appealing and appreciated.—**Read Proverbs 25:11.**

<sup>7</sup> A Christian husband should do his part not only by listening to what his wife says but also by striving to express his own feelings clearly. An elder who has been married for 27 years said: “I have to work at telling my wife what is deep in my heart.” A brother who has been married for 24 years observed: “I can bottle things up, thinking, ‘If I don’t talk about this issue, it will go away.’ Yet, I have come to realize that it is not a sign of weakness to show my feelings. When I struggle to express myself, I pray for

**4, 5.** How can insight help a married couple to understand each other more fully? Give examples.

**6, 7.** (a) In what way can the principle found at Ecclesiastes 3:7 help marriage mates to show insight? (b) How can a wife show discernment, and what effort should a husband make?



Little things make a big difference in a marriage

the right words to say and the right way to say them. Then I take a deep breath and start talking.” Also helpful is the right setting, perhaps when the couple are alone considering the day’s text or reading the Bible together.

<sup>8</sup> Important for both husband and wife are prayer and a strong desire to improve their communication skills. To be sure, it can be hard to change old ways. But when a couple love Jehovah, ask for his spirit, and view their union as sacred, they have the kind of motivation that many lack. A wife of 26 years wrote: “My husband and I take Jehovah’s view of marriage seriously, so we do not even consider separation. This makes us work harder to resolve problems by discussing them together.” Such loyalty and godly devotion please God and result in his rich blessing.—Ps. 127:1.

### GROW IN LOVE

<sup>9</sup> Love, “a perfect bond of union,” is the most important quality in a mar-

8. In making their marriage a success, what added motivation do Christian couples have?

9, 10. In what practical ways can a couple strengthen their bond of love?

riage. (Col. 3:14) Genuine love grows as a loyal couple experience life together, with its joys and challenges. They become even closer friends and cherish each other’s company. Such marriages are nourished, not by just a few great deeds, as portrayed in the media, but by countless smaller acts—a hug, a kind remark, a thoughtful gesture, a telling smile, or a sincere “how was your day?” These *little* things can make a *big* difference in a marriage. One couple who have been happily married for 19 years phone or text each other during the day “just to see how things are going,” the husband said.

<sup>10</sup> Love also impels a couple to continue learning about each other. (Phil. 2:4) In turn, such knowledge makes their love grow even stronger despite their imperfections. A successful marriage is not static but grows richer and stronger with time. So if you are married, ask yourself: ‘How well do I know my mate? Do I understand his or her feelings and thoughts on matters? How often do I think about my spouse, perhaps reflecting on the qualities that attracted me to him or her in the first place?’



## CULTIVATE RESPECT

<sup>11</sup> Even the happiest marriages are not perfect unions, and a loving couple may not always see eye to eye. Abraham and Sarah did not always agree with each other. (Gen. 21:9-11) Yet, their differences did not drive a wedge between them. Why not? They treated each other with dignity and respect. For instance, Abraham said “please” to Sarah. (Gen. 12:11, 13) She, on the other hand, obeyed Abraham and thought of him as her “lord.” (Gen. 18:12) When a couple lack respect for each other, this usually becomes evident in their pattern of speech or tone of voice. (Prov. 12:18) If they do not address the underlying problem, their marriage may be headed for tragedy.—*Read James 3:7-10, 17, 18.*

<sup>12</sup> Newlyweds should work especially hard to speak kindly and respectfully to each other, thus creating an atmosphere of free and honest communication. “The

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11. Why is respect vital to a successful marriage? Illustrate.

12. Why should newlyweds work especially hard to cultivate respectful speech?

first years of marriage, while being joyful, can sometimes be frustrating,” a husband recalled. “As you come to terms with your wife’s feelings, habits, and needs—and she with yours—things can get a bit wobbly! However, it will stand you both in good stead if you have a reasonable approach, a sense of humor, and the stabilizing qualities of humility, patience, and reliance on Jehovah.” How true!

## DISPLAY GENUINE HUMILITY

<sup>13</sup> Good communication within marriage is like a stream that flows gently and peacefully through a garden. Being “humble in mind” plays a key role in keeping that stream flowing. (1 Pet. 3:8) “Humility is the quickest route to resolve a difference because it moves you to say, ‘I’m sorry,’” noted a brother who has been married for 11 years. Happily married for 20 years, an elder commented: “Sometimes the words ‘I’m sorry’ are more important than ‘I love you.’” He

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13. Why is humility a vital factor in a healthy, happy marriage?

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Maintain good communication in your marriage



added: “One of the quickest shortcuts to humility is prayer. When my wife and I approach Jehovah together, we are reminded of our imperfection and God’s undeserved kindness. That subtle reminder helps me put things in proper perspective.”

<sup>14</sup> Pride, however, is anything but conciliatory. It stifles communication because it takes away both the desire and the courage to apologize. Instead of humbly saying, “I’m sorry; please forgive me,” the proud person makes excuses. Rather than courageously acknowledging a weakness, he points to faults in the other person. When hurt, instead of pursuing peace, he takes offense, perhaps retaliating with harsh words or icy silence. (Eccl. 7:9) Yes, pride can be lethal to a marriage. It is good to remember that “God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones.”—Jas. 4:6.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, it would be naive to think that pride will never surface. We need to recognize it and address it promptly. Paul told fellow Christians: “Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil.” (Eph. 4:26, 27) Failure to heed God’s Word can lead to needless distress. “On occasion, my husband and I have not applied Ephesians 4:26, 27,” lamented a sister. “The result has been some of the worst nights’ sleep I’ve ever had!” How much better it is to discuss matters right away with reconciliation as the goal! Of course, marriage mates may need to give each other a little time to cool down. It is also fitting to pray for

Jehovah’s help to get in the right frame of mind. This includes having a humble spirit, which will help you to focus on the problem, not on yourself, lest you aggravate the situation.—*Read Colossians 3:12, 13.*

<sup>16</sup> Humility and modesty help a married person focus on the strengths of his or her mate. To illustrate: A wife might have special talents that she uses for the benefit of the family. If her husband is humble and modest, he will not feel challenged by her but will encourage her to use her gifts, thus showing that he values and cherishes her. (Prov. 31:10, 28; Eph. 5:28, 29) At the same time, a humble and modest wife will not flaunt her abilities or belittle her husband. After all, the two of them are “one flesh,” and what hurts one hurts the other.—Matt. 19:4, 5.

<sup>17</sup> No doubt you want your marriage to be like that of Abraham and Sarah or Isaac and Rebekah—truly happy, long-lasting, and a cause for praise to Jehovah. If so, cleave to God’s view of marriage. Look to his Word for insight and wisdom. Cultivate true love—“the flame of Jah”—by thinking appreciatively about your mate. (Song of Sol. 8:6) Work hard to develop humility. Treat your mate with respect. If you do these things, your marriage will bring joy to you and to your heavenly Father. (Prov. 27:11) Indeed, your feelings may well reflect those of a husband of 27 years, who wrote: “I cannot imagine life without my wife. Our marriage continues to grow stronger every day. This is because of our love for Jehovah and our regular communication with each other.”

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**14.** How can pride affect a marriage?

**15.** Explain how applying the principle found at Ephesians 4:26, 27 can help a married couple deal with differences that may arise between them.

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**16.** How can humility help a couple to see their individual strengths in the right light?

**17.** What can help present-day marriages to be happy and a cause for praise to God?



# PARENTS, CHILDREN —COMMUNICATE WITH LOVE

*“Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath.”*

—JAS. 1:19.

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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Why is it important to make time for communication?

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How might parents apply James 1:19?

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How might children apply James 1:19?

“IF YOU were to somehow find out that your parents were going to die tomorrow, what would you most want to tell them today?” That was a question put to hundreds of children in the United States. Rather than focusing on any existing problems and differences that might have been troubling them, some 95 percent said that they would tell their parents: “I’m sorry” and “I love you so much.”—*For Parents Only*, by Shaunti Feldhahn and Lisa Rice.

<sup>2</sup> Generally, children love their parents, and parents love their children. This is especially true in Christian households. Although parents and children yearn to be close to one another, communication is sometimes difficult. Even when conversation may otherwise be frank and open, why are some topics avoided entirely? What are some barriers to good communication? How may they be overcome?

### ‘BUY OUT’ TIME TO COMMUNICATE

<sup>3</sup> Many families find that it is difficult to have enough time for meaningful communication. That was not always the case. Moses instructed Israelite fathers: “You must inculcate [God’s words] in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deut. 6:6, 7) Children spent the day either with their mother at home or with their father in the fields or at his workplace. There was plenty of time for children and parents to be together and converse. Consequently, parents

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1. 2. How do parents and children generally feel about one another, but what difficulty do they sometimes face?

3. (a) Why is good communication a challenge for many families? (b) Why was spending time together not a problem for families in ancient Israel?



Do not let distractions and isolation hinder communication within your family

were in a position to get to know the needs, desires, and personality of their children. Likewise, there was time and sufficient opportunity for children to get to know their parents well.

<sup>4</sup> How different life is today! In some countries, children begin preschool at an early age, sometimes when they are only two years old. Many fathers and mothers work at jobs away from home. During the little time that parents and children are together, communication competes with and often loses out to computers, television, and other electronic media. In many cases, children and parents live separate lives; they are virtual strangers. Meaningful conversation may be almost nonexistent.

<sup>5</sup> Can you 'buy out' time from other things so as to spend more of it with your family? (*Read Ephesians 5:15, 16.*)

4. Why is communication a problem in many families today?

5, 6. How do some parents 'buy out' more time to spend with their children?

Some families agree to limit television viewing or computer use. Others strive to have at least one meal together each day. And what a fine opportunity the arrangement of family worship offers for parents and children to draw close to one another and discuss spiritual matters calmly! Setting aside an hour or so a week for this purpose is a good start, but more is needed to open the door to deep conversation. For that, regular and frequent communication is a must. Before your young one heads out for school, say something encouraging, discuss the daily text, or offer a prayer with your child. Doing so can make a great difference in his or her day.

<sup>6</sup> Some parents have been able to make changes in their lifestyle so as to spend more time with their young ones. For instance, Laura,\* a mother of two young children, left a full-time job for this reason. She says: "In the morning

\* Name has been changed.



all of us were rushing out the door to get to work or school. When I returned home in the evening, my children were already asleep, having been put to bed by a nanny. My giving up the job has meant that we have to manage with less money, but I feel that I am now in touch with my children's thoughts and problems. I listen to what they say in prayer and can guide them, encourage them, and teach them."

### BE "SWIFT ABOUT HEARING"

<sup>7</sup> After conducting many interviews with young people, the authors of the book *For Parents Only* noted another barrier to communication. They say: "The kids' number one most common complaint about their parents was, 'They don't listen.'" That problem is hardly one-sided. Parents frequently make the same complaint about their children. To keep the lines of communication open, family members must listen—really listen—to one another.—*Read James 1:19.*

<sup>8</sup> Parents, do you really listen to your children? This may be difficult when you are tired or when the conversation seems somewhat trivial. But what appears to be trivial to you may be very important to your child. To be "swift about hearing" means being attentive not only to what your child says but also to how he or she says it. Tone of voice and body language give clues about how a young one feels. Asking questions is also important. "A person's thoughts are like water in a deep well," says the Bible, "but someone with insight can draw them out." (Prov. 20:5, *Today's English*

*Version*) Insight and discernment are especially needed when you are drawing your children out on sensitive topics.

<sup>9</sup> Children, do you obey your parents? "Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father," says God's Word, "and do not forsake the law of your mother." (Prov. 1:8) Remember, your parents love you and have your best interests at heart, so it is wise to listen to them and obey them. (Eph. 6:1) It is easier to be obedient when there is good communication and when you know that you are loved. Tell your parents how you feel about things. This will help them to understand you. Of course, you should also try to understand them.

<sup>10</sup> When it comes to listening to advice from young people your own age, you need to be careful. They may tell you what you want to hear, but their advice may not help you at all. In fact, it could even harm you. Lacking the wisdom and experience of older ones, most young people do not have a long-term view of things and may not be able to discern the consequences of certain actions. Remember the example of King Solomon's son Rehoboam. When he became the king of Israel, it would have been wise for him to follow the counsel of the older men. Instead, he followed the foolish advice of the younger men he had grown up with. He thus lost the support of most subjects of his kingdom. (1 Ki. 12:1-17) Rather than imitating Rehoboam's unwise course, work hard to keep the lines of communication with your parents open. Share your thoughts with them. Benefit from their counsel, and learn from their wisdom.—Prov. 13:20.

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7. What is a common complaint of both children and parents?

8. How might parents truly listen to their children?

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9. Why should children listen to their parents?

10. What do we learn from the Bible's account of Rehoboam?

<sup>11</sup> Parents, if you do not want your children to look to their peers for advice, make yourself approachable, easy to talk to. One teenage sister wrote: "All I have to do is mention a boy's name and my parents get uneasy. That makes me uneasy and reluctant to continue talking." Another young sister wrote: "Many teenagers want their parents' advice, but if their parents don't take them seriously, the kids will go to someone else who will, even to those who are less experienced." If you are willing to listen compassionately to your children on every sort of topic, you will likely find that they will open up to you and welcome your guidance.

#### **BE "SLOW ABOUT SPEAKING"**

<sup>12</sup> A barrier to communication also arises when parents react emotionally and negatively to what their children tell them. Understandably, Christian parents want to protect their children. These "last days" are fraught with dangers—spiritual and otherwise. (2 Tim. 3: 1-5) However, what parents see as protective may seem excessive to their children.

<sup>13</sup> Parents are wise not to express their opinion too quickly. True, it is not always easy to keep quiet when your children tell you something distressing. But it is important to listen carefully before responding. Wise King Solomon wrote: "When anyone is replying to a matter before he hears it, that is foolishness on his part and a humiliation." (Prov. 18:13) If you stay calm, you

will hear more and your children will keep talking. You have to get the complete picture before you are in a position to help. Behind the "wild talk" may be a heart in turmoil. (Job 6:1-3) As loving parents, use your ears to gain understanding and your tongue to heal.

<sup>14</sup> Children, you too need to be "slow about speaking," not immediately objecting to what your parents say, for they have the God-given responsibility to train you. (Prov. 22:6) They may have experienced situations like the ones you now experience. Moreover, they regret the mistakes they made when they were young and earnestly want to protect you from making similar ones. Therefore, view your parents as allies, not adversaries; as advisers, not antagonists. (**Read Proverbs 1:5.**) "Honor your father and your mother," and show them that you love them as they love you. That will make it easier for them to 'bring you up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.'—Eph. 6:2, 4.

#### **BE "SLOW ABOUT WRATH"**

<sup>15</sup> We are not always patient with those whom we love. "To the holy ones and faithful brothers in union with Christ at Colossae," the apostle Paul wrote: "You husbands, keep on loving your wives and do not be bitterly angry with them. You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted." (Col. 1:1, 2; 3:19, 21) Paul exhorted the Ephesians: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you." (Eph. 4:31) Cultivating long-suffering, mild-

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**11.** What may result if parents are not approachable?

**12.** How might parents' reactions obstruct communication with their children?

**13.** Why should parents be careful about expressing their opinion too quickly?

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**14.** Why should children be slow about speaking?

**15.** What will help us not to lose patience and become upset with our loved ones?

ness, and self-control—aspects of the fruitage of God’s spirit—will help us to stay calm even when under stress.—Gal. 5:22, 23.

<sup>16</sup> Consider the example of Jesus. Imagine the immense stress that he was feeling at the last evening meal he had with his apostles. Jesus knew that within hours he would die a slow and painful death. The sanctification of his Father’s name and the salvation of the human family depended on his faithfulness. Yet, at that very meal, there “arose a heated dispute among [the apostles] over which one of them seemed to be greatest.” Jesus did not scream at them or express bitterness toward them. Instead, he calmly reasoned with them. Jesus reminded them that they had stuck with him during trying times. Although Satan was demanding to sift them as wheat, Jesus expressed confidence that they would prove faithful. He even concluded a covenant with them.—Luke 22:24-32.

<sup>17</sup> Children too need to stay calm. Especially when they reach their teenage years may they feel that direction from their parents suggests a lack of trust. While it may at times seem that way, recognize that your parents’ concern is an expression of their love for you. By calmly listening to them and being cooperative, you will earn their respect and will establish a reputation as a responsible person. Such behavior may well win you more freedom in certain areas of life. Exercising self-control is the course of wisdom. “All his spirit is what a stupid one lets out,” states a wise proverb, “but he that is wise keeps it calm to the last.”—Prov. 29:11.

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**16.** How did Jesus correct his disciples, and why was this so remarkable?

**17.** What will help children to stay calm?



Do you listen carefully to your children?

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<sup>18</sup> So dear parents and children, do not be discouraged if the communication in your family is not as open as you would like it to be. Keep working at it, and keep on walking in the truth. (3 John 4) In the new world, perfect people will be able to interact perfectly, without misunderstandings and contention. Presently, though, all of us do things we later regret. So do not hesitate to apologize. Forgive freely. “Be harmoniously joined together in love.” (Col. 2:2) Love has power. ‘Love is long-suffering and kind. It does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.’ (1 Cor. 13:4-7) Keep on cultivating love, and communication will flourish, bringing joy to your family and praise to Jehovah.

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**18.** How does love result in good communication?

# Why Our Lives Have Real Meaning

AS TOLD BY PATRICIA SMITH

AS SOON AS my son Gary was born in 1958, I sensed that something was wrong. However, it took ten months for the doctors to diagnose his condition and five more years before London specialists confirmed it. How sad I was when my daughter Louise, born nine years after Gary, showed symptoms far more serious than his.

“Both of your children have LMBB syndrome,\* and you will have to live with it,” the doctors quietly told me. At that time, very little was known about this rare genetic disorder. Typical features include visual impairment leading to blindness, obesity, extra fingers and/or toes, developmental delay, coordination problems, diabetes mellitus, osteoarthritis, and kidney abnormalities. Therefore, caring for my children would be quite a challenge. A recent study estimated that 1 in 125,000 people in Britain suffers from this syndrome, though many more may have a mild form of it.

## JEHOVAH BECOMES OUR “SECURE HEIGHT”

I spoke to one of Jehovah’s Witnesses soon after I got married, and I immediately recognized the ring of truth. But my husband was not interested at all. Because of his job, we were constantly moving, so I was unable to associate with a congregation. Nevertheless, I continued to read the Bible and to pray to Jehovah. How comfort-

\* Laurence-Moon-Bardet-Biedl syndrome was named after four doctors who identified this recessive genetic disorder, inherited when both parents carry the recessive gene. Today, it is commonly referred to as Bardet-Biedl syndrome. There is no cure.

ing it was to read that “Jehovah will become a secure height for anyone crushed, a secure height in times of distress” and that he “will certainly not leave those looking for [him]”—Ps. 9:9, 10.

Gary had limited vision, so at the age of six, he was sent for specialized education at a boarding school on the south coast of England. He regularly called me regarding matters that worried him, and over the phone I was able to help him understand basic Bible principles. A few years after Louise was born, I became ill myself, with multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia. Gary returned home from boarding school when he was 16. However, his sight was deteriorating, and he was registered as blind in 1975. In 1977 my husband left us.

Soon after Gary’s return, we became involved in the activities of a loving congregation, and I was baptized in 1974. I was so grateful when an elder helped Gary cope with the physical changes he was experiencing during his teenage years. Other Witnesses assisted me with home chores, and eventually, local social services appointed five of them as our official home caregivers. What a blessing this has been!

Gary continued to make fine progress in the truth and was baptized in 1982. He had his heart set on auxiliary pioneering. Therefore, I decided to accompany him in that work and continued to do so for a number of years. My son was very happy when, some time later, our circuit overseer asked him, “Why don’t you become a regular pioneer, Gary?” That was just the en-



couragement Gary needed, and in 1990 he was appointed.

Gary has had two hip replacements, the first in 1999 and the second in 2008, but Louise's health problems were much more serious. She was born totally blind, and when I saw an extra toe on one of her feet, I realized that she too had LMBB syndrome. Examinations soon revealed serious defects in many of her internal organs as well. Over the years, she has had major surgeries, including five operations on her kidneys. Like Gary, she has diabetes.

Alert to the difficulties that can arise when surgery is needed, Louise talks to the surgeons, the anesthesiologists, and the management team beforehand to explain her decisions regarding nonblood medical procedures. As a result, she enjoys a good rapport with all who care so well for her physical problems.

### LIVING MEANINGFUL LIVES

Our home is a hub of activity, all centered on the worship of Jehovah. Before modern electronic aids became available, I used to spend many hours reading to Gary and Louise. Now CDs, DVDs, and recordings from [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org) enable all of us to enjoy the weekly schedule of Bible study at different times, and we can have a meaningful share in commenting at Christian meetings.

Gary's answers are sometimes memorized, and if he has a talk in the Theocratic Ministry School, he is able to deliver it extemporaneously. He was appointed a ministerial servant in 1995 and is always busy at the Kingdom Hall, welcom-

ing members of the congregation and assisting with the sound system.

Fellow Witnesses accompany Gary in the ministry, often pushing the wheelchair he uses because of his arthritis. One Witness has helped him conduct a Bible study with an interested person. Gary has also encouraged a Christian who was inactive for 25 years. Both individuals now attend Christian meetings.

At the age of nine, Louise learned how to knit from her grandmother, and one of the caregivers and I taught her embroidery. Because she continues to enjoy needlework so much, she knits colorful blankets for babies as well as for older members of the congregation. She also makes greeting cards, using small adhesive pictures. The cards are treasured by those who receive them. In her early teens, Louise learned touch-typing. Now, with the aid of a special talking computer, she regularly contacts friends by e-mail. Louise was baptized when she was 17 years old. During special preaching campaigns, we enjoy auxiliary pioneering together. Like Gary, Louise memorizes scriptures to express faith in God's promises of a world in which "the eyes of the blind ones will be opened" and "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isa. 33:24; 35:5.

How grateful we are for the precious truths in Jehovah's inspired Word! Our hearts are full of gratitude for the loving support of our congregation, for without it much of our activity would not be possible. And especially because of Jehovah's help, our lives have real meaning.



How grateful we  
are for the precious  
truths in Jehovah's  
inspired Word!



# SAFEGUARD YOUR INHERITANCE BY MAKING WISE CHOICES

*“Abhor what is wicked,  
cling to what is good.”*

—ROM. 12:9.

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## HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

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How would you define our  
spiritual inheritance?

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What warning lessons can we  
learn from the actions of Esau?

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How can we safeguard our  
inheritance?

MILLIONS of us have made the wise choice to serve Jehovah God and closely follow the steps of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 16:24; 1 Pet. 2:21) We do not take lightly this life of dedication to God. Our choice was based, not on a superficial knowledge of a few scriptures, but on a thorough study of God’s Word. As a result, we learned many faith-strengthening details about the inheritance that Jehovah has placed before those who ‘take in knowledge of him and of the one whom he sent forth, Jesus Christ.’—John 17:3; Rom. 12:2.

<sup>2</sup> To maintain our standing as Christians, we must make choices that please our heavenly Father. This article will therefore consider these important questions: What is our inheritance? How should we view it? How can we make sure that we obtain our inheritance? What will help us to make wise choices?

## OUR INHERITANCE—WHAT IS IT?

<sup>3</sup> A relatively small number of Christians look forward to receiving “an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance”—the priceless privilege of ruling with Christ in heaven. (1 Pet. 1:3, 4) To receive that inheritance, these individuals must be “born again.” (John 3:1-3) What is the inheritance of the millions of Jesus’ “other sheep,” who are associated with his anointed followers in preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom? (John 10:16) The other sheep will receive the inheritance that sinful

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1, 2. (a) How did you make your decision to serve God? (b) What questions can we ask about our spiritual inheritance?

3. What inheritance is awaiting (a) the anointed and (b) the “other sheep”?

Adam and Eve never received—everlasting life on a paradise earth with no more suffering, death, or mourning. (Rev. 21: 1-4) Jesus could therefore promise an evildoer who died with him: “Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise.”—Luke 23:43.

<sup>4</sup> Even now, we enjoy certain aspects of our inheritance. Because we exercise faith in “the ransom paid by Christ Jesus,” we have inner peace and a close relationship with God. (Rom. 3:23-25) We have a clear understanding of the precious promises contained in God’s Word. Moreover, being part of a loving international brotherhood is a source of tremendous joy. And what a blessed privilege it is to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. No wonder we cherish our inheritance!

<sup>5</sup> To hold fast to our wonderful inheritance, though, we must remain alert to Satan’s ploys. Satan has always tried to influence God’s people to make choices that could cost them their inheritance. (Num. 25:1-3, 9) Aware that his end is near, Satan has stepped up his efforts to mislead us. (**Read Revelation 12:12, 17.**) If we are to keep on ‘standing firm against the machinations of the Devil,’ we must continue to value our inheritance highly. (Eph. 6:11) In this regard, the warning example of the patriarch Isaac’s son Esau provides lessons we do well to take to heart.

### DO NOT BE LIKE ESAU

<sup>6</sup> Nearly 4,000 years ago, Esau and his twin brother, Jacob, were born to Isaac

and Rebekah. As the twins grew up, they differed in temperament and in their choice of activities. “Esau became a man knowing how to hunt, a man of the field,” whereas “Jacob [was] a blameless man, dwelling in tents.” (Gen. 25:27) The Hebrew word rendered “blameless,” notes Bible translator Robert Alter, “suggests integrity or even innocence.”

<sup>7</sup> When Esau and Jacob were 15 years old, their grandfather Abraham died, but Jehovah’s promise to Abraham did not die. Later, Jehovah repeated it to Isaac, pointing out that all nations of the earth would bless themselves by means of Abraham’s seed. (**Read Genesis 26: 3-5.**) That promise revealed that the Messiah—the faithful “seed” of Genesis 3: 15—would come through Abraham’s offspring. As Isaac’s firstborn son, Esau had the legal right to that promise. What a wonderful inheritance awaited Esau! Did he appreciate it?

<sup>8</sup> One day when Esau came in from the field, he saw Jacob “boiling up some stew.” “Quick, please,” said Esau, “give me a swallow of the red—the red there, for I am tired!” In reply, Jacob told Esau: “Sell me, first of all, your right as firstborn!” What choice did Esau make? Incredibly, he said: “Of what benefit to me is a birthright?” Yes, Esau chose a bowl of stew over his right as firstborn! To make the birthright transaction legal, Jacob insisted: “Swear to me first of all!” Without hesitation, Esau gave up his birthright. After that, “Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he went to eating and drinking. Then he got up and went his way. So Esau despised the birthright.”—Gen. 25:29-34.

**8, 9.** (a) What choice did Esau make concerning his inheritance? (b) Years later, what did Esau realize about his choice, and how did he react?

4. What blessings do we already enjoy?

5. What has Satan tried to do to God’s people, and what can help us to stand firm against his machinations?

6, 7. Who was Esau, and what inheritance awaited him?





Do not put your spiritual inheritance in jeopardy

<sup>9</sup> Years later, when Isaac thought that he was about to die, Rebekah made arrangements to make sure that Jacob would indeed receive Esau's forfeited birthright. When Esau belatedly realized what a foolish choice he had made, he begged Isaac: "Bless me, even me too, my father! . . . Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" When Isaac stated that he could not change the blessing he had already given to Jacob, "Esau raised his voice and burst into tears."—Gen. 27:30-38.

<sup>10</sup> What aspects of Esau's disposition stand out in the Scriptures? He showed that satisfying his fleshly desires was more important to him than gaining the

**10.** How did Jehovah view Esau and Jacob, and why?

future blessings that would have flowed from his inheritance. Esau did not cherish his birthright and evidently did not really love God. Furthermore, Esau ignored the effect his action would have on his offspring. In contrast, Jacob deeply appreciated his inheritance. For instance, Jacob acted in harmony with parental instruction in choosing a wife. (Gen. 27:46–28:3) Because Jacob made this choice that required patience and sacrifice, he became a forefather of the Messiah. How did God view Esau and Jacob? By means of the prophet Malachi, Jehovah said: "I loved Jacob, and Esau I have hated."—Mal. 1:2, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Is what the Bible says about Esau relevant to Christians today? Indeed it is. The apostle Paul cautioned fellow believers to be careful that "there may be no fornicator nor anyone not appreciating sacred things, like Esau, who in exchange for one meal gave away his rights as firstborn." (Heb. 12:16) That warning still applies to Christians. We must maintain our appreciation for sacred things so that we will not be overpowered by fleshly desires and lose our spiritual inheritance. Why, though, did Paul refer to fornication in connection with Esau's action? Because having a fleshly disposition like that of Esau makes it more likely that a person will give up sacred things for illicit pleasures, such as fornication.

### PREPARE YOUR HEART NOW

<sup>12</sup> As servants of Jehovah, we certainly do not search for tempting situa-

**11.** (a) Why is Esau's example relevant to us as Christians? (b) Why did Paul refer to fornication in connection with the action of Esau?

**12.** (a) How does Satan place temptations in our path? (b) Give Scriptural examples that can help us when we have to make difficult choices.



tions that could lead to immoral sexual behavior. Instead, we pray that Jehovah God will not permit us to succumb when someone tempts us to disobey Him. (Matt. 6:13) But Satan constantly tries to undermine our spirituality as we strive to maintain our integrity in this depraved world. (Eph. 6:12) As the god of this wicked system of things, the Devil knows how to exploit our imperfect desires by putting in our path temptations common to imperfect humans. (1 Cor. 10:8, 13) For instance, imagine being in a situation that offered an opportunity to satisfy a particular desire in an immoral way. What choice would you make? Would you be like Esau and say: ‘Quick! Give it to me!’ Or would you resist the temptation and flee from it, as did Jacob’s son Joseph, who was tempted by Potiphar’s wife?—**Read Genesis 39:10-12.**

<sup>13</sup> Many of our brothers and sisters have been in situations in which they had to choose between acting either like Esau or like Joseph. Most have acted wisely and made Jehovah’s heart rejoice. (Prov. 27:11) When faced with temptation, however, some of our fellow believers have chosen to act like Esau, putting their spiritual inheritance at risk. In fact, a considerable number of judicial actions and disfellowshippings that take place each year are the result of sexual misconduct. How crucial it is to prepare our heart now—well before we find ourselves in situations that test our integrity! (Ps. 78:8) We can take at least two steps that will serve as a bulwark against temptation and will help us to make wise choices later.

**13.** (a) Today, how have many acted like Joseph, but how have some acted like Esau? (b) Examples of those who act like Esau make us aware of what crucial need?

## REFLECT AND REINFORCE

<sup>14</sup> The first step involves *reflecting on the consequences of our actions*. The depth of our appreciation for our spiritual inheritance depends greatly on the depth of our love for Jehovah, the Giver of that inheritance. After all, if we love someone, we do not want to hurt that person. Instead, we strive to merit his approval. Since that is the case, we do well to take some time to reflect on what the consequences would be for us and others were we to give in to unclean fleshly desires. We should ask ourselves: ‘How would my selfish action affect my relationship with Jehovah? What effect would the wrong action have on my family? How would it affect my brothers and sisters in the congregation? Could I stumble others?’ (Phil. 1:10) We could also ask: ‘Are a few moments of illicit pleasure worth the heartache that my choice would cause? Do I really want to end up like Esau, weeping bitterly when I realize what I have done?’ (Heb. 12:17) Reflecting on such questions will help us to “abhor what is wicked” and “cling to what is good.” (Rom. 12:9) Especially will love for Jehovah move us to cling to our inheritance.—Ps. 73:28.

<sup>15</sup> The second step entails *reinforcing our defenses*. Jehovah has made many provisions for us to reinforce our defenses against factors in the world that endanger our spirituality. His provisions include Bible study, Christian meetings, the field ministry, and prayer. (1 Cor. 15:58) Each time we pour out our heart in prayer to Jehovah and every time we have a meaningful share in the

**14.** Reflecting on what questions can help us to “abhor what is wicked” and “cling to what is good”?

**15.** What will strengthen our defenses against forces that endanger our spirituality?



We reinforce our defenses by seeking Jehovah's wisdom

Christian ministry, we are, as it were, strengthening our bulwark against temptations. (*Read 1 Timothy 6:12, 19.*) To a considerable extent, the strength of our defenses depends on our own efforts. (Gal. 6:7) This is highlighted in the second chapter of Proverbs.

#### **“KEEP SEEKING FOR IT”**

<sup>16</sup> Proverbs chapter 2 encourages us to acquire wisdom and thinking ability. These gifts enable us to choose between right and wrong, between self-discipline and self-indulgence. But whether we will succeed depends on our willingness to put forth effort. Underscoring that fundamental truth, the Bible states: “My

**16, 17.** How can we succeed in acquiring the ability to make wise choices?

son, *if* you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, so as to pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment; *if*, moreover, you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, *if* you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God. For Jehovah himself gives wisdom; out of his mouth there are knowledge and discernment.”—Prov. 2:1-6.

<sup>17</sup> Clearly, then, our success in acquiring the ability needed to make wise choices depends on whether we meet the conditions mentioned in Proverbs. We can succeed in standing firm against temptations *if* we let Jehovah's sayings mold our inner person, *if* we pray persistently for God's direction, and *if* we keep searching for God's knowledge as if looking for hidden gems.

<sup>18</sup> Jehovah gives knowledge, understanding, discernment, and wisdom to those who put forth effort to seek these gifts. The more we look for them and use them, the closer we will be drawn to the Giver, Jehovah. In turn, our intimate relationship with Jehovah God will serve as a protection when we find ourselves confronted with a temptation. Drawing close to Jehovah and having a reverential fear of him will protect us from engaging in wrongdoing. (Ps. 25:14; Jas. 4:8) May the enjoyment of friendship with Jehovah and the application of godly wisdom move all of us to keep on making the kind of choices that will gladden Jehovah's heart and safeguard our inheritance.

**18.** What are you determined to keep on doing, and why?

# They Stood Firm in an “Hour of Test”

THE outbreak of World War I in 1914 eventually brought the neutral stand of the Bible Students to the world’s attention. (Isa. 2:2-4; John 18:36; Eph. 6:12) How did God’s servants in Britain fare?

The Military Service Act of 1916 introduced to Britain conscription of unmarried men aged 18 to 40. It made provision for the exemption of those whose objection genuinely rested on “religious or moral convictions.” The government established tribunals to determine who should be granted exemption and to what degree.

Within a short time, some 40 Bible Students were held in military prisons, and 8 had been sent to the front in France. Prompted by this unjust action, the brothers in Britain addressed to Prime Minister Herbert Asquith a letter protesting the imprisonments, along with a petition bearing 5,500 signatures.

News then came that the eight sent to France had been sentenced to be shot for their refusal to accept military discipline. But when the brothers were lined up to face the firing squad, their sentences were commuted to ten years’ penal servitude. They were returned to England to serve their time in civil prisons.

As the war dragged on, conscription was extended to include married men. In a test case in Manchester, England, the defendant was Henry Hudson, a medical doctor and Bible Student. On August 3, 1916, the court ruled that he was a defaulter, fined him, and turned him over to the military. At the same time, another test case was heard in Edinburgh, Scotland. James Frederick Scott, a 25-year-old colporteur, was found not guilty. The Crown appealed the case but dropped it in favor of yet another test case in London. This time, a brother named Herbert Kipps was found guilty, fined, and handed over to the military.

By September 1916, a total of 264 brothers had applied for exemption from military service. Of these, 5 received exemption, 154 were given “work of national importance,” 23 were assigned to a noncombatant corps, 82 were handed over to the military, and some were court-martialed for disobeying orders. The public reacted to the cruel treatment these men received, so the government transferred them from military prison to civilian work camps.



Henry Hudson



James Frederick Scott



Pryce Hughes





Dartmoor Prison,  
where many Bible  
Students were confined



Herbert Senior

Edgar Clay and Pryce Hughes, who later served as branch overseer in Britain, worked on a dam in Wales. On the other hand, Herbert Senior, one of the eight who had been returned from France, was sent to Wakefield Prison in Yorkshire. Others served their sentences of hard labor in the harsh conditions of Dartmoor Prison, where they formed the largest single group of conscientious objectors.

Frank Platt, a Bible Student who had agreed to undertake non-combatant duties, was subjected to prolonged and vicious persecution when sent to the front. Atkinson Padgett, who learned the truth shortly after enlisting, also suffered brutal treatment by the military authorities for refusing to engage in combat.

Although our position as Christian neutrals may not have been fully understood by our brothers nearly a century ago, they sought to please Jehovah God. Those mentioned by name in this report set a fine example of neutrality during an especially difficult “hour of test.” (Rev. 3:10)—From our archives in Britain.



Frank Platt



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