

FEBRUARY 2022

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
APRIL 4–MAY 1, 2022

SONG 3

Our Strength, Our Hope,
Our Confidence

PREVIEW

This article will help us see the need to strengthen our trust in Jehovah and our trust in his earthly representatives. We will also see how doing so benefits us now and prepares us to face future challenges.

Do You Trust in Jehovah's Way of Doing Things?

“The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness who is never unjust; righteous and upright is he.”—DEUT. 32:4.

TODAY many find it hard to trust anyone in authority. They have observed that the legal and the political systems tend to favor the wealthy and the powerful and to deny justice to the poor. The Bible accurately observes: “Man has dominated man to his harm.” (Eccl. 8:9) In addition, the conduct of certain religious leaders leaves much to be desired, which has caused some people to lose confidence in God. So when a person agrees to study the Bible with us, we face the challenge of helping him to build trust in Jehovah and trust in His earthly representatives.

² Of course, Bible students are not the only ones who need to learn to trust in Jehovah and to trust in his organization. Even those of us who have been in the truth for many years must never lose sight of the fact that Jehovah's way of doing things is always best. At times, situations arise that may test our confidence in that regard. In this article, we will discuss three areas in which our faith could be tested: (1) as we read certain Bible accounts, (2) when we receive direction from Jehovah's organization, and (3) when we face future challenges.

TRUST IN JEHOVAH AS YOU READ THE BIBLE

³ As we read God's Word, we may have questions

- 1-2. (a) Why do many today find it hard to trust those in authority?
(b) What will we consider in this article?
3. How could certain Bible accounts test our trust in Jehovah?

about the way that Jehovah dealt with some people and about some of the decisions he made. For example, in the book of Numbers, we read that Jehovah sentenced an Israelite to death for collecting wood on the Sabbath. In the second book of Samuel, we learn that centuries later, Jehovah pardoned King David for committing adultery and murder. (Num. 15:32, 35; 2 Sam. 12:9, 13) We might wonder, ‘Why did Jehovah forgive David for murder and adultery but sentence the other man to death for a seemingly less serious transgression?’ To answer this question, consider three factors that we do well to keep in mind as we read the Bible.

4 *The Bible does not always provide all the details of an account.* For example, we know that David was sincerely repentant of his actions. (Ps. 51:2-4) But what kind of person was the man who broke the Sabbath law? Was he sorry for what he had done? Had he disobeyed Jehovah’s laws in the past? Had he ignored or even rejected previous warnings? The Bible does not say. However, we can be certain of this: Jehovah “is never unjust.” (Deut. 32:4) He bases his decisions on all the facts—not on hearsay, prejudice, or anything else that so often distorts human judgment. (**Read Genesis 18:20, 21; Deuteronomy 10:17.**) The more we learn about Jehovah and his standards, the more we develop trust in his judgments. Even if a Bible account raises questions that we cannot answer

4. How do Genesis 18:20, 21 and Deuteronomy 10:17 strengthen our confidence in Jehovah’s judgments?



Imperfection Distorts Our View of Justice

Because we are imperfect, at times we may view matters more harshly or more leniently than Jehovah does. (1 Sam. 16:7) This could make us question Jehovah’s way of doing things. Our situation is like that of a person whose eyeglasses have fogged up. No matter how hard he strains to see things clearly, his view remains distorted. Similarly, if some aspect of Jehovah’s way of doing things is hard to understand, imperfection might be distorting our perception of justice. It is **our** view—not **Jehovah’s** view—that is incorrect. —Ezek. 18:29.

at present, we know more than enough about our God to be certain that he “is righteous in all his ways.”—Ps. 145:17.

5 *Our sense of justice is tainted by imperfection.* God made us in his image, so we yearn to see people treated fairly. (Gen. 1:26) But because we are imperfect, we can misjudge matters, even

5. How does imperfection affect our sense of justice? (See also the box “Imperfection Distorts Our View of Justice.”)

when we think we have all the facts. Recall, for example, how displeased Jonah was with Jehovah's decision to extend mercy to the people of Nineveh. (Jonah 3:10–4:1) Yet, consider the results. The lives of well over 120,000 repentant Ninevites were saved! In the end, it was Jonah—not Jehovah—who needed to be corrected.

⁶ *Jehovah does not owe humans an explanation for his decisions.* True, Jehovah did allow his servants in the past to express their concerns about decisions he had made or was about to make. (Gen. 18:25; Jonah 4:2, 3) And occasionally, he explained his decision. (Jonah 4:10, 11) Nevertheless, Jehovah is not obliged to explain himself to us. As our Creator, he does not need our approval, either before or after he acts.—Isa. 40:13, 14; 55:9.

TRUST IN JEHOVAH WHEN YOU RECEIVE DIRECTION

⁷ We no doubt wholeheartedly agree that Jehovah always does what is right. The challenge for us, however, might be to trust in his human representatives. We might wonder whether those with a measure of authority in Jehovah's organization really act according to Jehovah's direction or their own. That could have been the thinking of some who lived in Bible times. Consider the examples cited in paragraph 3. A relative of the man who broke the Sabbath law might have wondered whether Moses had really consulted Jehovah before the

death sentence was pronounced. And a friend of Uriah the Hittite, whose wife committed adultery with David, might have concluded that David used his position as king to escape the punishment that he so well deserved. The plain truth is that we cannot say that we trust in Jehovah if we do not trust in his earthly representatives—those whom Jehovah trusts.

⁸ Today Jehovah leads the earthly part of his organization by means of “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45) Like the first-century governing body, this slave oversees God's people worldwide and gives direction to congregation elders. **(Read Acts 16:4, 5.)** The elders, in turn, implement the direction in the congregations. We show that we trust in Jehovah's way of doing things by heeding the direction we receive from the organization and the elders.

⁹ At times, we may find it challenging to cooperate with decisions made by the elders. For example, in recent years many congregations and circuits have been reorganized. In some cases, the elders have asked publishers to support a different congregation with a view to making the best use of the seating capacity in our Kingdom Halls. If we are asked to join a new congregation, we may find it difficult to leave friends and family. Do the elders receive divine direction that tells them where to assign

6. Why does Jehovah not have to explain his decisions to us?

7. What challenge might we face, and why?

8. What similarity is there between what is reported at Acts 16:4, 5 and how the Christian congregation functions today?

9. When might we find it difficult to cooperate with a decision made by the elders, and why?

each publisher? No. And that fact might make it challenging for us to follow the direction we receive. But Jehovah trusts the elders to make such decisions, and we too need to trust them.*

¹⁰ Why should we cooperate with the elders and support their decisions even when the decisions are not what we would have preferred? Because in doing so, we help preserve the unity among God's people. (Eph. 4:2, 3) Congregations thrive when all humbly submit to the decisions reached by the body of elders. **(Read Hebrews 13:17.)** More important, we show Jehovah that we trust in him by cooperating with those whom he trusts to care for us.—Acts 20:28.

¹¹ We can strengthen our trust in the direction we receive from the elders by remembering that they pray for holy spirit when considering matters that affect the congregation. They also carefully consider relevant Bible principles and consult guidelines provided by Jehovah's organization. Their heartfelt desire is to please Jehovah and to provide the best care possible for his people. These faithful men know that they are accountable to God for the way they handle their responsibilities. (1 Pet. 5:2, 3) Consider this fact: In a world that is divided by race, religion, and politics, Jehovah's people are united in worship

* At times, there may be extenuating circumstances that require an individual or a family to stay in their current congregation. See *Our Kingdom Ministry*, November 2002, "Question Box."

10. In line with Hebrews 13:17, why should we cooperate with the elders?

11. What can help us strengthen our trust in the direction we receive from the elders?

of the one true God. This could be accomplished only with Jehovah's blessing on his organization!

¹² Jehovah has entrusted the elders with the weighty responsibility of keeping the congregation clean. If a Christian commits a serious sin, Jehovah expects the elders to determine whether that individual can remain in the congregation. Among other things, they need to find out whether the person is truly sorry for what he did. He may claim to be repentant, but does he truly hate what he did? Is he determined not to repeat the sin? If bad associations led up to the wrongdoing, is he willing to cut off those associations? The elders prayerfully consider the facts in the light of the Scriptures, taking into account the wrongdoer's attitude toward what happened. Then they decide whether the wrongdoer may remain in the congregation. In some cases, he must be disfellowshipped.—1 Cor. 5:11-13.

¹³ How might our trust in the elders be tested? If the person who is disfellowshipped is not a close friend or a relative, we might readily accept the elders' decision. But suppose the disfellowshipped person is a close companion. We might worry that the elders did not consider all the facts, or we might wonder whether they truly judged the matter the way Jehovah would. What can help us maintain the proper attitude toward the decision?

12. What factors must the elders consider when determining if a person is repentant?

13. What concern might we have if a friend or a relative is disfellowshipped?

What will help us to trust and obey the direction we receive during the great tribulation?

(See paragraph 15)



¹⁴ We do well to remember that disfellowshipping is Jehovah's arrangement and that it benefits the congregation and may benefit the wrongdoer. If an unrepentant wrongdoer were permitted to remain in the congregation, he could be a corrupting influence. (Gal. 5:9) In addition, he may not recognize the seriousness of his sin, and he may have little incentive to adjust his thinking and actions so that he can regain Jehovah's favor. (Eccl. 8:11) We can be sure that when deciding if a person should be disfellowshipped, the elders take their responsibility seriously. They realize that, like the judges in ancient Israel, they "do not judge for man but for Jehovah."—2 Chron. 19:6, 7.

HOW TRUSTING IN JEHOVAH NOW IS TRAINING US FOR THE FUTURE

¹⁵ As the end of this system of things draws near, we need to trust in Jehovah's way of doing things as never before. Why? During the great tribulation, we may receive instructions that seem strange, impractical, or illogical.

14. What can help us if the elders' decision regarding wrongdoing affects us personally?

15. Why do we need to trust Jehovah's direction now more than ever before?

Of course, Jehovah will not speak to us personally. He will likely provide direction through his appointed representatives. That will hardly be the time to second-guess the direction or to view it with skepticism, wondering, 'Is this really coming from Jehovah, or are the responsible brothers acting on their own?' How will you fare during that crucial time in human history? The answer might be indicated by how you view theocratic direction **now**. If you trust the direction we receive today and readily obey, you will likely do the same during the great tribulation.—Luke 16:10.

¹⁶ There is another aspect that we would do well to consider—Jehovah's judgments at the end of this system of things. Right now, we hold out hope for many who are not serving Jehovah, including our unbelieving relatives. But at Armageddon, Jehovah, through Jesus, will make the final decision about their future. (Matt. 25:31-33; 2 Thess. 1:7-9) It will not be up to us to decide who will receive Jehovah's mercy and who will not. (Matt. 25:34, 41, 46) Will we be able to trust in Jehovah's judgments, or will

16. How could our trust in Jehovah's judgments be tested in the near future?

they be a stumbling block for us? Clearly, we need to strengthen our trust in Jehovah now so that we will trust him implicitly in the future.

¹⁷ Imagine how we will feel in God's new world when we see the results of Jehovah's judgments. False religion will be gone, and so will the greedy commercial system along with the political system that has oppressed people and caused untold misery throughout history. Poor health, old age, and the death of loved ones will no longer be part of our daily experience. Satan and the demons will be confined for a thousand years. The consequences of their rebellion will be gone. (Rev. 20:2, 3) How grateful we will then be that we trusted in Jehovah's way of doing things!

¹⁸ Might life in God's new world present some challenges that could test our trust in Jehovah's way of doing things? Consider, for example, what happened shortly after the Israelites were freed

17. How will we benefit from Jehovah's judgments at the end of this system of things?

18. What lessons can we learn from the Israelites' example, as recorded at Numbers 11:4-6 and 21:5?

from slavery in Egypt. Some started complaining because they missed the fresh food they had enjoyed there, and they treated Jehovah's provision of manna with contempt. (**Read Numbers 11:4-6; 21:5.**) Might we have similar thoughts after the great tribulation comes to its end? We do not know how much work will be involved in removing the effects of the destruction and in gradually making the earth a paradise. Likely, there will be a lot of work to do and some inconveniences at first. Would we dare to complain about what Jehovah provides at that time? One thing is certain: The more we appreciate Jehovah's provisions *now*, the more likely we will do so *then*.

¹⁹ Jehovah's way of doing things is always right. We need to be convinced of that. We also need to have confidence in those whom Jehovah trusts to carry out his instructions. Never forget the words Jehovah spoke through his prophet Isaiah: "Your strength will be in keeping calm and showing trust."—Isa. 30:15.

19. How would you summarize the main points of this article?

WHAT CAN HELP US IF OUR TRUST IN JEHOVAH'S WAY OF DOING THINGS IS TESTED . . .

■ as we read certain Bible accounts?

■ when we receive direction?

■ as we face future challenges?

SONG 123

Loyally Submitting to
Theocratic Order

PREVIEW

Jehovah's people recognize the value of listening to Bible-based counsel. At the same time, it is not always easy to accept counsel. Why is that the case? And what can help us to benefit from the counsel we receive?

“Listen to the Words of the Wise”

“Incline your ear and listen to the words of the wise.”

—PROV. 22:17.

ALL of us need counsel from time to time. In some cases, we may take the initiative to ask someone we respect for advice. In other cases, a concerned brother may approach us and point out that we are about to take “a false step”—one that we will regret. (Gal. 6:1) Finally, counsel may come to us in the form of correction after we have made a serious mistake. Whatever form it takes, we should listen to counsel. Doing so is good for us and could save our life!—Prov. 6:23.

² Our theme text encourages us to “listen to the words of the wise.” (Prov. 22:17) No human knows everything; there is always someone who has greater knowledge or experience than we do. **(Read Proverbs 12:15 and footnote.)** So listening to counsel is a sign of humility. It indicates that we are aware of our limitations; we realize that we need help to reach our goals. Wise King Solomon wrote under inspiration: “There is accomplishment through many advisers [or “counselors,” ftn.].”—Prov. 15:22.

³ We may receive indirect or direct counsel. What do we mean by indirect counsel? We may read something in the Bible or in one of our publications that makes us stop and think about the course we are taking and moves us to adjust our course. (Heb. 4:12) We could call that *indirect* counsel. What do we mean by direct counsel? An elder

1. What form might counsel take, and why do we all need it?
2. In harmony with Proverbs 12:15 and footnote, why should we listen to counsel?
3. In what ways may we receive counsel?

or another qualified brother might point out something that we need to work on. That could be called **direct** counsel. If someone loves us enough to share Bible-based counsel with us, we should show our appreciation by listening to what he has to say and taking the counsel to heart.

⁴ Realistically, we may find it especially difficult to accept direct counsel. We might even become offended. Why? Although we readily admit that we are imperfect, we might find it challenging to accept counsel when someone points out a specific flaw in us. (**Read Ecclesiastes 7:9.**) We might justify ourselves. We might question the counselor's motives or take offense at the way he gave the counsel. We might even find fault with the counselor himself, reasoning: 'What right does he have to counsel me? He has his own flaws!' Ultimately, if the counsel we receive does not suit us, we might ignore it or look elsewhere for counsel that is more to our liking.

⁵ In this article, we will discuss Scriptural examples of those who rejected counsel and those who accepted it. We will also consider what will help us to accept counsel and benefit from it.

THEY REJECTED COUNSEL

⁶ Consider the example of **Rehoboam**. When he became king of Israel, his subjects came to him with a request. They asked him to lighten the load

that his father, Solomon, had laid upon them. Commendably, Rehoboam consulted with the older men of Israel to see how he should reply to the people. The older men advised the king that if he did what the people asked, they would always support him. (1 Ki. 12:3-7) Apparently, Rehoboam was not satisfied with that advice, so he consulted the men who had grown up with him. Those men were likely in their 40's, so they must have had some experience in life. (2 Chron. 12:13) But on this occasion, they gave Rehoboam bad advice. They counseled him to add to the burdens of the people. (1 Ki. 12:8-11) Faced with two different viewpoints, Rehoboam could have approached Jehovah in prayer and asked Him which advice he should follow. Instead, he decided to accept the advice that appealed to him and listened to the younger men. The consequences were disastrous for Rehoboam and for the people of Israel. In our case, the advice we receive may not always be what we want to hear. Still, if it is based on God's Word, we should accept it.

⁷ **King Uzziah** rejected counsel. He entered a section of Jehovah's temple where only the priests were allowed to be, and he attempted to offer incense. The priests of Jehovah said to him: "It is not proper for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to Jehovah! It is only the priests who should burn incense." How did Uzziah react? If he had humbly accepted the counsel and left the temple immediately, Jehovah might have forgiven him. Instead, "Uzziah . . . became enraged."

4. According to Ecclesiastes 7:9, what reaction should we avoid when we receive counsel?

5. What will we consider in this article?

6. What do we learn from the way King Rehoboam reacted to counsel he received?

7. What does King Uzziah's example teach us?



INDIRECT COUNSEL



DIRECT COUNSEL



Which of these two forms
of counsel do you find
harder to accept?
(See paragraphs 3-4)



Why did he reject the counsel? He evidently felt that as king, he had the right to do whatever he wanted. But Jehovah did not see it that way. As a result of his presumptuous act, Uzziah was struck with leprosy and “remained a leper until the day of his death.” (2 Chron. 26:16-21) Uzziah’s example teaches us that, no matter who we are, if we reject Bible-based counsel, we will lose Jehovah’s approval.

THEY ACCEPTED COUNSEL

⁸ In contrast to the warning examples just discussed, the Bible provides good examples of those who were blessed because they accepted counsel. Consider **Job**. Although he was God-fearing, he was not perfect. Under intense pressure, he expressed some wrong viewpoints. As a result, he received straightforward counsel, both from Elihu and from Jehovah. How did Job react? He humbly accepted the counsel. He said: “I spoke, but without understanding . . . I take back what I said, and I repent in dust and ashes.” Jehovah blessed Job for his humble reaction.—Job 42:3-6, 12-17.

⁹ **Moses** is a good example of someone who accepted correction after he had made a serious mistake. On one occasion, he lost his temper and did not honor Jehovah. Because of this, Moses lost out on the privilege of entering the Promised Land. (Num. 20:1-13) When Moses expressed his disappointment over this decision, Jehovah told him: “Never speak to me again about this

matter.” (Deut. 3:23-27) Moses did not become bitter. Rather, he accepted Jehovah’s decision, and Jehovah continued to use him to lead Israel. (Deut. 4:1) Both Job and Moses are good examples for us to imitate when it comes to accepting counsel. Job adjusted his viewpoint; he did not make excuses. Moses proved that he accepted Jehovah’s counsel by remaining faithful even after he lost a privilege that was precious to him.

¹⁰ We benefit when we imitate the example set by such faithful men as Job and Moses. (**Read Proverbs 4:10-13.**) Many of our brothers and sisters have done just that. Note what a brother named Emmanuel, who lives in Congo, says about a warning he received: “Mature brothers in my congregation saw that I was about to suffer spiritual shipwreck, and they came to my rescue. I applied their counsel, and it helped me avoid a lot of problems.”* A pioneer in Canada named Megan says regarding counsel: “It hasn’t always been what I wanted to hear, but it has been what I needed to hear.” And a brother from Croatia named Marko says: “I lost a privilege, but when I look back, I realize that the counsel I received helped me regain my spiritual balance.”

¹¹ Another example of someone who benefited from accepting counsel was Brother Karl Klein, who served as a member of the Governing Body. In his life

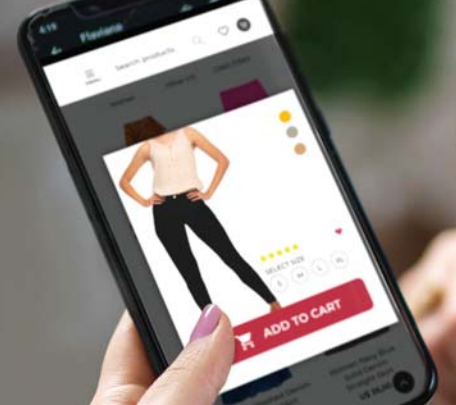
* Some names have been changed.

8. How did Job react to counsel?

9. How did Moses set a good example when it comes to accepting counsel?

10. (a) What does Proverbs 4:10-13 indicate about the benefits of accepting counsel? (b) What fine attitude toward counsel have some displayed?

11. What did Brother Karl Klein observe about accepting counsel?



Why does the younger sister ask a mature sister for counsel?
(See paragraph 16)

story, Brother Klein related a time when he received strong counsel from Joseph F. Rutherford, with whom he had a close friendship. Brother Klein admitted that at first he did not react well to the counsel. He said: “The next time [Brother Rutherford] saw me, he cheerily said, ‘Hello Karl!’ But because of still feeling hurt, I just muttered a greeting. He countered, ‘Karl, watch out! The Devil’s after you!’ Embarrassed, I replied, ‘Oh, there’s nothing, Brother Rutherford.’ But he knew better, and so repeated his warning, ‘That’s all right. Just watch out. The Devil’s after you.’ How right he was! When we harbor resentment against a brother, especially for saying something he has a right to say . . . , we leave ourselves open to the Devil’s snares.”* (Eph. 4:25-27) Brother Klein accepted Brother Rutherford’s counsel, and their warm relationship remained intact.

WHAT CAN HELP US TO ACCEPT COUNSEL?

¹² What can help us to accept counsel? We need to **be humble** by remembering just how imperfect we really are and

* See *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1984, pp. 21-28.

12. How can humility help us to accept counsel? (Psalm 141:5)

how foolish we can be at times. As discussed earlier, Job had the wrong viewpoint. But he later adjusted his thinking, and Jehovah blessed him for it. Why? Because Job was humble. He proved his humility by accepting the counsel that Elihu gave him, even though Elihu was much younger than he was. (Job 32:6, 7) Humility will likewise help us apply counsel, even when we feel that we do not deserve it or when the one giving it is younger than we are. An elder in Canada says, “Since we do not see ourselves as others see us, how can we progress if no one counsels us?” Who among us does not need to make progress in cultivating the fruitage of the spirit and in carrying out the Christian ministry?—**Read Psalm 141:5.**

¹³ **View counsel as an expression of God’s love.** Jehovah wants what is best for us. (Prov. 4:20-22) When he counsels us by means of his Word, a Bible-based publication, or a mature fellow believer, he is expressing his love for us. “He does so for our benefit,” says Hebrews 12:9, 10.

¹⁴ **Focus on the content, not the delivery.** At times, we may feel that the coun-

13. How should we view the counsel we receive?

14. What should we focus on when counseled?

sel we received was not given in the best manner. Of course, anyone giving counsel should try to make it as easy as possible to accept.* (Gal. 6:1) But if we are the one being counseled, we do well to focus on the message—even if we feel that it could have been delivered in a better way. We might ask ourselves: ‘Even if I do not appreciate the manner in which the counsel was given, is there some truth to what was said? Can I look past the imperfections of the messenger and benefit from the message itself?’ It would be wise on our part to find a way to benefit from any counsel we receive. —Prov. 15:31.

ASK FOR COUNSEL AND REAP BENEFITS

¹⁵ The Bible urges us to ask for counsel. Proverbs 13:10 says: “Wisdom belongs to those who seek advice.” How true that is! Those who ask for counsel rather than wait for someone to approach them will often make greater spiritual progress than those who do not seek advice. So take the initiative by asking for counsel.

* In the next article, we will discuss how those who give counsel can do so in a tactful manner.

15. Why should we ask for counsel?

¹⁶ When might we ask for counsel from fellow believers? Consider some situations. (1) A sister asks an experienced publisher to join her on a study and later asks for advice on how she can improve her teaching methods. (2) A single sister would like to purchase a pair of slacks, so she asks a mature sister for her honest opinion about the selection. (3) A brother is assigned to give his first public talk. He asks an experienced speaker to listen carefully to his talk and offer him some constructive counsel on how he can improve. Even a brother who has given talks for many years does well to ask for such feedback from experienced speakers and then to apply the counsel he receives.

¹⁷ In the coming weeks or months, all of us will receive counsel—either direct counsel or indirect counsel. When that happens, recall the points we have just discussed. Remain humble. Focus on the content, not on the delivery. And apply the counsel you receive. None of us are born wise. But when we “listen to counsel and accept discipline,” God’s Word promises that we will “become wise.” —Prov. 19:20.

16. In what situations might we ask for counsel?

17. How can we benefit from counsel?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ■ What can we learn from Scriptural examples of those who rejected counsel? | ■ What can we learn from Scriptural examples of those who accepted counsel? | ■ What will help us to accept counsel? |
|---|---|--|

SONG 102

“Assist Those
Who Are Weak”

PREVIEW

It is not always easy to give counsel. When we need to do so, how can we offer it in a way that is beneficial and refreshing? This article will help elders in particular to give counsel that appeals to the heart of those receiving it.

Does Your Counsel “Make the Heart Rejoice”?

“Oil and incense make the heart rejoice; so does sweet friendship springing from sincere counsel.”—PROV. 27:9.

MANY years ago, two elders visited a sister who had been missing meetings for some time. The elder who took the lead in the conversation shared a number of scriptures about meeting attendance. He thought that the visit had gone well, but as he and his companion were leaving, the sister said, “You brothers do not have a clue about what I am going through.” The brothers had offered their counsel without asking the sister about her problems and circumstances. As a result, she did not feel that their counsel was helpful.

² Looking back, the elder who took the lead in the discussion says: “At the time, I thought the sister was being disrespectful. But as I thought about it, I came to see that I had shown up with all the appropriate scriptures instead of showing up with all the appropriate questions, such as ‘What has been happening in your life?’ ‘How can I help?’” The elder learned a valuable lesson from that experience. Today he is an empathetic and helpful shepherd.

³ As shepherds, elders are responsible for giving counsel when it is needed. However, there are times when others in the congregation may need to give counsel. For example, a brother or a sister may give Bible-based advice to a friend. (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 25:12) Or an older sister may “advise the younger women” in such matters as

- 1-2. What did one brother learn about offering counsel?
3. Who in the congregation may give counsel?

those mentioned at Titus 2:3-5. And, of course, parents often need to give counsel and correction to their children. So while this article is directed to congregation elders in particular, all of us can benefit by reviewing ways in which we can give counsel that is both practical and motivating and that will “make the heart rejoice.”—Prov. 27:9.

⁴ In this article, we will discuss four questions about giving counsel: (1) What is the right motive? (2) Is the counsel really necessary? (3) Who should give the counsel? (4) How can you give effective counsel?

WHAT IS THE RIGHT MOTIVE?

⁵ Elders love their brothers and sisters. At times, they show that love by counseling someone who is heading down a wrong path. (Gal. 6:1) Before speaking to the person, though, an elder might consider some of the facets of love that the apostle Paul mentioned. “Love is patient and kind. . . . It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (**Read 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7.**) Meditating on those Bible verses will help the elder to examine his motives for giving the counsel and to approach his brother with the proper attitude. If the one receiving the counsel can sense that the elder cares about him, he will be more likely to accept the counsel.—Rom. 12:10.

⁶ The apostle Paul set a good exam-

4. What will we discuss in this article?

5. How can having the right motive help an elder to frame his counsel in an appealing way? (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7)

6. What good example did the apostle Paul set?

ple as an elder. For instance, when the brothers in Thessalonica needed counsel, Paul did not hesitate to give it. However, in his letters to them, Paul first took note of their faithful work, their loving labor, and their endurance. He also considered their circumstances, kindly acknowledging that their life was not easy and that they were bearing up under persecution. (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:4) He even told those brothers that they were an example to other Christians. (1 Thess. 1:8, 9) How happy they must have been to receive Paul’s warm commendation! There could be no doubt that Paul loved his brothers very much. That is why he was able to give effective counsel in both of his letters to the Thessalonians.—1 Thess. 4:1, 3-5, 11; 2 Thess. 3:11, 12.

⁷ What could happen if we did not give counsel in the right manner? An experienced elder observed, “Some react negatively to counsel, not because there is something wrong with the advice, but because it was not given in a loving way.” What can we learn from this? Counsel is much easier to accept when it is given out of love, not out of irritation.

IS THE COUNSEL REALLY NECESSARY?

⁸ Elders should not be hasty about giving counsel. Before offering it, an elder should ask himself: ‘Do I really need to say something? Am I certain that what the other person is doing is wrong? Has

7. Why might someone react negatively to counsel?

8. What should an elder ask himself when deciding whether to counsel someone?

a Bible command been violated? Or is it simply a difference of opinion?’ Elders wisely avoid being “hasty with [their] words.” (Prov. 29:20) If the elder is not sure that he needs to counsel someone, he might approach another elder to discuss whether there is a Scriptural issue that has to be addressed.—2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.

⁹ Consider an example. Suppose an elder is concerned about a fellow believer’s choices in dress or grooming. The elder could ask himself, ‘Is there a Scriptural reason to say something?’ Conscious of the need to be objective, he might ask another elder or mature publisher for his thoughts. Together they might review Paul’s counsel on dress and grooming. **(Read 1 Timothy 2:9, 10.)** Paul outlined certain broad principles, observing that a Christian’s dress should be appropriate, modest, and sensible. But Paul did not make a list of dos and don’ts. He recognized that Christians have a right to express their individual taste within Scriptural limits. So in determining whether counsel is needed, the elders should consider if the person’s choices reflect modesty and good sense.

¹⁰ We do well to realize that two mature Christians may make different choices, both of which are acceptable. We should not impose our own standards of right and wrong on fellow believers.—Rom. 14:10.

9. What do we learn from Paul about how to give counsel on dress and grooming? (1 Timothy 2: 9, 10)

10. What must we keep in mind with regard to personal choices?

WHO SHOULD GIVE THE COUNSEL?

¹¹ If it is clear that some counsel is necessary, the next question is, Who should give it? Before counseling a married sister or a minor, an elder would consult with the family head, who might prefer to care for the matter himself.* Or the family head might ask to be present when the elder gives the counsel. And, as mentioned in paragraph 3, there may be times when it is preferable for an older sister to counsel a younger sister.

¹² There is another factor to consider. An elder might ask himself, ‘Am I the best person to give the counsel, or would it be better received if it came from someone

* See the article “Understanding Headship in the Congregation” in the February 2021 issue of *The Watchtower*.

11-12. If counsel is necessary, what questions should an elder ask himself, and why?

Why should Christian elders be “quick to listen”?

(See paragraphs 13-14)



else?’ For example, a person who struggles with feelings of low self-worth may respond better to counsel from an elder who has dealt with this challenge rather than one who has not. The elder who experienced similar feelings is likely to have greater empathy, and what he says may be more readily accepted. However, all elders have the responsibility to encourage and motivate their brothers and sisters to make any adjustments that the Scriptures require. So when admonition is needed, what matters most is that the counsel is given.

HOW CAN YOU GIVE EFFECTIVE COUNSEL?

¹³ **Be ready to listen.** When an elder is preparing to offer counsel, he should ask himself: ‘What do I know about my brother’s circumstances? What is happening in his life? Could he be facing challenges that I am unaware of? What does he need most right now?’

¹⁴ The principle recorded at James 1: 19 certainly applies to those who give counsel. James wrote: “Everyone must be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.” An elder may assume that he has all the facts, but does he really? Proverbs 18:13 reminds us: “When anyone replies to a matter before he hears the facts, it is foolish and humiliating.” It is best to get the facts directly from the person himself. That involves listening before speaking. Remember the lesson learned by the elder quoted in the introduction of this article. He realized that instead of begin-

13-14. Why is it important for an elder to listen?



What will make it easier
for elders to give counsel?
(See paragraph 16)

ning the visit with material he had prepared, he should have asked the sister such questions as: “What has been happening in your life?” “How can I help?” If elders take the time to get the facts, they are more likely to help and encourage their brothers and sisters.

¹⁵ **Get to know the flock.** As mentioned at the outset, giving effective counsel involves more than simply reading a few scriptures or offering a suggestion or two. Our brothers and sisters need to sense that we care for them, that we understand them, and that we want to help them. **(Read Proverbs 27:23.)** Elders should do their best to develop close friendships with their brothers and sisters.

¹⁶ Elders would certainly want to avoid giving the impression that they are all business, as it were, and that they approach their brothers only when

15. How can elders apply the principle found at Proverbs 27:23?

16. What will help elders to give effective counsel?

something needs to be handled. Instead, they regularly talk with their brothers and sisters, showing personal concern for them as they face challenges. “If you do that,” observes one experienced elder, “you will build a good relationship. Then when you need to give counsel, you will find it much easier to do so.” And the one receiving the counsel will find it much easier to accept.

¹⁷ ***Be patient and kind.*** Patience and kindness are especially needed when someone initially resists Bible-based counsel. An elder must guard against the tendency to get irritated if his counsel is not immediately accepted or acted on. Regarding Jesus, it was prophesied: “No bruised reed will he crush, and no smoldering wick will he extinguish.” (Matt.

17. When especially does an elder need to be patient and kind?

Why should an elder be patient and kind when giving counsel?

(See paragraph 17)



12:20) So in his private prayers, the elder may ask Jehovah to bless the one needing counsel and to help him understand the reason for the counsel and apply it. The brother being counseled may need time to think about what was said. If the elder is patient and kind, the one he is trying to help will not be distracted by the way the counsel is given, but he will be able to focus on the message. Of course, the counsel should always be based on God’s Word.

¹⁸ ***Learn from your mistakes.*** As long as we are imperfect, we will not be able to apply the suggestions in this article perfectly. (Jas. 3:2) We will make mistakes, but when we do, we should try to learn from them. If our brothers and sisters can perceive that we love them, they will likely find it easier to forgive us when we offend them by something we say or do. —See also the box “A Note to Parents.”

18. (a) Where giving counsel is concerned, what should we keep in mind? (b) As shown in the picture with the box, what are the parents discussing?

A Note to Parents

At times, it is necessary for parents to counsel their children. In this regard, parents will find it helpful to consider the principles discussed in this article. Before counseling a young one, the parent might ask himself: ‘Do I have to make an issue over this matter? Will I handle the situation in a balanced, loving way, or should I wait until I am not irritated? Do I have all the facts? Is there some-

thing happening in my child’s life that I am unaware of? After the counsel is given, will my child know that he has been treated fairly and with love?’ There is never a reason for a Christian parent to treat his children harshly. Remember, Paul said that love is “patient and kind.” (1 Cor. 13:4) After all, our children are part of “the flock of God.”—1 Pet. 5:2; Eph. 6:4.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

¹⁹ As we have seen, it is not easy to give effective counsel. We are imperfect, and so are those whom we counsel. Keep in mind the principles we have considered in this article. Make sure that the counsel is given with the right motive. Also, be sure that the counsel is really needed

19. How can we make the heart of our brothers and sisters rejoice?

and that you are the right person to give it. Before offering counsel, ask questions and listen carefully so that you can understand what the person is facing. Try to see things from his perspective. Be gentle, cultivating a warm friendship with your brothers and sisters. Remember the goal: We want our counsel not only to be effective but also to “make the heart rejoice.”—Prov. 27:9.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What is the right motive for giving counsel?
- Who should give counsel?
- How can you give effective counsel?

SONG 17

“I Want To”

PREVIEW

Jesus always put the welfare of others ahead of his own. In this article, we will consider ways in which we can imitate his example. We will also consider how imitating Jesus' self-sacrificing attitude will bring us long-lasting benefits.

Imitate Jesus by Serving Others

“There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—ACTS 20:35.

LONG ago, the Bible foretold that God's people would “offer themselves willingly” in Jehovah's service under the direction of his Son. (Ps. 110:3) That prophecy is certainly being fulfilled today. Each year, Jehovah's zealous servants devote hundreds of millions of hours to the preaching work. They do so voluntarily and at their own expense. They also take time to support their fellow believers physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Appointed brothers spend countless hours preparing meeting parts and shepherding fellow believers. What is the motivation behind all this work? It is love—love for Jehovah and love for neighbor.—Matt. 22:37-39.

² Jesus set an outstanding example in putting the interests of others ahead of his own. We are trying our best to follow his footsteps. **(Read Romans 15:1-3.)** Those who imitate him will reap benefits. Jesus said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—Acts 20:35.

³ In this article, we will review some of the sacrifices that Jesus made to serve others and we will consider how we can imitate his example. We will also discuss how we can increase our desire to serve others.

1. What fine spirit do we see among Jehovah's people?
2. As described at Romans 15:1-3, what example did Jesus set?
3. What will we consider in this article?

IMITATE JESUS' EXAMPLE

4 *Jesus gave of himself even when he was tired.* Think of Jesus' reaction when a multitude of people went to meet him on a mountainside, likely near Capernaum. Jesus had spent the whole night in prayer. He must have been very tired, but when he saw the crowds, his heart went out to the poor and the sick among them. He not only healed them but also delivered one of the most motivating public discourses of all time—the Sermon on the Mount.—Luke 6:12-20.

5 *How family heads are imitating Jesus.* Imagine this scenario: At the end of a long day's work, a family head arrives home exhausted. Although he is tempted to cancel the Family Worship session scheduled for that evening, he begs Jehovah for the strength to conduct the study. Jehovah answers his prayer, and

4. How did Jesus put the needs of others ahead of his own?

5. How are family heads imitating Jesus' self-sacrificing attitude when they are tired?

the study is held as usual. The children learn an important lesson that evening, namely, that for their parents, spiritual things take priority over everything else.

6 *Jesus was generous with his personal time.* Can you imagine how Jesus felt when he learned that his friend John the Baptizer had been beheaded? Jesus must have been deeply saddened. The Bible says: "At hearing [about the death of John], Jesus departed from there by boat into an isolated place to be alone." (Matt. 14:10-13) We can understand why he wanted to be by himself. Many of us prefer to grieve in private. But for Jesus, that was not to be. A large crowd arrived at that isolated place before he did. How did Jesus react? He thought about the needs of the crowd, and he "was moved with pity" for them. He could see that they desperately needed spiritual refreshment, and he was quick to fill that need. In fact, "he started to

6. Give an example of how Jesus sacrificed his personal time to help others.

Despite being tired,
how did Jesus react
when a crowd came
to him?

(See paragraph 4)





In what ways can we imitate Jesus' self-sacrificing spirit in our life?

(See paragraph 5)

teach them [not a few things, but] many things.”—Mark 6:31-34; Luke 9:10, 11.

⁷ **How loving elders imitate Jesus.** We deeply appreciate the work that our self-sacrificing elders do in our behalf! Much of that work is unseen by the congregation in general. For example, when there is a medical emergency, members of the Hospital Liaison Committee rush to the aid of their fellow believers. Often such emergencies arise in the middle of the night! But moved with compassion for their brother or sister in distress, those dear elders, along with their families, put the interests of their fellow believers ahead of their own.

⁸ Elders also share in the construction

7-8. Give an example that shows how loving elders imitate Jesus when a need arises.

of Kingdom Halls and other facilities as well as in disaster relief. And much could be said about the countless hours elders in our own congregation spend on instructing, encouraging, and supporting us. All these brothers and their families deserve our sincere commendation. May Jehovah be with the spirit they show! Of course, like everyone else, elders need to be balanced. They should not spend so much time in such theocratic activities that the well-being of their family suffers.

HOW TO CULTIVATE A SELF-SACRIFICING SPIRIT

⁹ **Read Philippians 2:4, 5.** Granted, not all of us are elders, but all of us can

9. According to Philippians 2:4, 5, what mental attitude should all Christians develop?

learn to imitate Jesus' self-sacrificing spirit. The Bible says that he "took a slave's form." (Phil. 2:7) Think of the significance of that statement. A valued slave, or servant, would look for opportunities to please his master. As a slave of Jehovah and a servant to your brothers, no doubt you desire to become even more useful to Jehovah and to your fellow believers. You can do so by considering the following suggestions.

¹⁰ **Analyze your attitude.** Ask yourself such questions as these: 'How willing am I to make personal sacrifices to help others? For example, how do I respond if I am asked to visit an elderly brother in a nursing home or to take an older sister to the meetings? Am I quick to offer my help when there is a need for volunteers to clean a convention site or to maintain the Kingdom Hall?' Jehovah is pleased when we unselfishly give of our time and resources—all of which are dedicated to him—to assist others. If we see the need to improve, what can we do?

¹¹ **Pray earnestly to Jehovah.** Suppose you discern that you need to improve in some aspect, but you lack the motivation to make the necessary changes. In that case, turn to Jehovah in earnest prayer. Be honest. Tell Jehovah how you feel, and ask him to give you "both the desire and the power to act."—Phil. 2:13.

10. What questions can we ask ourselves?

11. How can prayer help us to cultivate a self-sacrificing spirit?

¹² If you are a young, baptized brother, ask Jehovah to help you cultivate the desire to be of greater service to the congregation. In some countries, there are more elders than there are ministerial servants, and many of those ministerial servants are middle-aged or older. As the organization keeps growing in size, we need more young brothers to help us look after Jehovah's people. If you are willing to serve wherever you are needed, you will be happy. Why? Because you will please Jehovah, you will gain a good reputation, and you will have the satisfaction that comes from helping others.

¹³ **Be alert to the needs of others.** The apostle Paul admonished the Hebrews: "Do not forget to do good and to share what you have with others, for God is well-pleased with such sacrifices." (Heb. 13:16) That was practical advice! Not long after receiving this letter, Christians in Judea had to leave their homes, their businesses, and their unbelieving relatives and had to "begin fleeing to the mountains." (Matt. 24:16) At that time, there was no doubt an urgent need for them to help one another. If prior to this they had been applying Paul's advice to share what they had with one another, they would have found it easier to adapt to their new way of life.

¹⁴ Our brothers and sisters may not always let us know about their needs. For

12. What need could a young, baptized brother fill?

13-14. What practical steps can we take to help our brothers and sisters? (See cover picture.)



example, a sister falls asleep in death, leaving behind her grieving husband. Does our brother need help with meals, transportation, or household chores? He may not say anything for fear of imposing on us. But he may deeply appreciate it if we take the initiative and offer to provide the needed assistance. We should not assume that somehow everything will be taken care of or that the one who is in need will always let us know how we can help. Ask yourself, ‘If I were in such a situation, what help would I appreciate receiving?’

¹⁵ **Be approachable.** No doubt you know brothers and sisters in your congregation who are always ready to help others. They never make us feel that we are imposing on them. We know that we can count on them when a need arises, and we would love to be just like them! Alan, an elder in his 40’s, wants to be approachable. Reflecting on Jesus’ example, Alan says: “Jesus was busy, but people of all ages were drawn to him and felt comfortable asking him for help. They saw him as a man who really cared about them. I wholeheartedly want to reflect Jesus’ attitude and be known as someone who is approachable, warm, and caring.”

¹⁶ We should not be discouraged if we fail to imitate Jesus perfectly. (Jas. 3:2) A student artist cannot perfectly imitate the work of a master artist. But as the student learns from his mistakes

15. To be self-sacrificing, what must we be resolved to do?

16. How can applying Psalm 119:59, 60 help us to follow Jesus’ example closely?

By imitating Jesus’ self-sacrificing attitude, elders set an example for young ones to follow
(See paragraph 17)

and strives to follow the example of the master artist as closely as possible, he will keep improving. Similarly, if we act on what we have learned through personal Bible study, doing our best to correct any flaws we may have, we can successfully follow the model that Jesus left for us.—**Read Psalm 119:59, 60.**

BENEFITS OF BEING SELF-SACRIFICING

¹⁷ Our self-sacrificing attitude can be contagious. An elder named Tim says: “We have young brothers who have progressed and have been appointed as ministerial servants—some at a very young age—in part because they imitated the willing-to-serve attitude that they saw in others. Their unselfish efforts help our congregation and provide more support to the elders.”

17-18. As we imitate Jesus’ self-sacrificing attitude, what benefits will result?

¹⁸ We live in a world that is dominated by selfishness. But Jehovah’s people stand out as different. We have been touched by the self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus, and we are determined to follow his example. No, we cannot follow his steps perfectly, but we can “follow his steps closely.” (1 Pet. 2:21) As we do our best to imitate Jesus’ self-sacrificing attitude, we too will experience the joy of gaining Jehovah’s approval.

PICTURE DESCRIPTION **Page 24:** A young brother, Dan, observes how two elders visit his father in the hospital. Dan is influenced by the loving example that the elders set. He is also moved to be alert to the needs of others in the congregation. Another young brother, Ben, observes the concern that Dan shows. Dan’s example encourages Ben to help with cleaning the Kingdom Hall.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- In what ways did Jesus serve others?
- How can we imitate Jesus’ example?
- What steps can we take to cultivate a self-sacrificing spirit?



I Found Something Better Than Medicine

AS TOLD BY RENÉ RUHLMANN

“WHAT you are telling me is my childhood dream come true!” I enthusiastically spoke those words to two new patients back in 1971. I had just opened my first clinic as a newly qualified doctor. Who were those patients, and what was that dream of mine? Let me tell you how that conversation changed my priorities in life and why I believe that my childhood dream will soon come true.

In 1941, I was born into a modest family living in Paris, France. I enjoyed learning, so imagine my disappointment when at age ten, I became sick with tuberculosis and had to stop my studies at school! Doctors recommended that I remain in bed to avoid tiring my lungs. So for several months, I spent my time reading a dictionary and listening to programs broadcast on Radio Sorbonne by the University of Paris. When

my doctor finally said that I was cured and could return to school, I was overjoyed. I said to myself, ‘What doctors do is wonderful!’ From then on, I dreamed of curing people of their sicknesses. Whenever my father asked me what I would like to do later in life, my answer was always the same, “I want to be a doctor.” That is how medicine became my first love.

SCIENCE DRAWS ME CLOSER TO GOD

As a family, we were nominal Catholics. But the idea of God was vague in my mind, and I had many unanswered questions. It was only after I started studying medicine at university that I became convinced that life was created.

I remember the first time I observed tulip cells under a microscope. I was impressed by how the cell’s components reacted to heat and cold. I also observed the cytoplasm (a substance inside the cell) contract when exposed to salt and expand when put in pure water. These and countless other reactions enable organisms to adapt to changing environments. When I observed the incredible complexity of each cell, I could see that life was no accident.

During my second year of medical studies, I saw more evidence that God exists. In anatomy classes, we examined how the structure of the human forearm enables us to bend and straighten our fingers. The relative position of the muscles, ligaments, and tendons is a marvel of engineering. For example, I learned that the tendons that attach one of the forearm muscles to the second bone of the finger divide in two, forming bridges under which the tendons going to the fingertips slide and are held in place. Strong tissues also hold the tendons close to the finger bones. Without these mechanisms, the tendons in the hand would stick out like taut bowstrings. I could clearly see that a great intelligence was behind the design of the human body.

My admiration for the Designer of life grew as I studied the process of childbirth. I learned that before birth, a healthy fetus receives oxygen from its mother via the umbilical cord. Therefore, the alveoli, tiny balloon-shaped structures inside the lungs, have not yet been inflated. As the time for birth approaches, the alveoli line themselves with a substance known as surfactant. Then after birth, a remarkable chain of events accompanies the newborn's first breath. A hole in the baby's heart closes, directing blood to the lungs. At that vital moment, the surfactant prevents the surfaces of the alveoli from sticking together as they quickly fill with air. Instantly, the baby is equipped to breathe for itself.

I wanted to get to know the One who created such marvels, so I started to read the Bible in earnest. I became fascinated by the laws of hygiene included in the covenant God made with the nation of Israel over 3,000 years ago. God instructed the Israelites to bury their excrement, to wash themselves regularly with water, and to quarantine anyone showing signs



Lydie and me on our wedding day, April 3, 1965

of an infectious disease. (Lev. 13:50; 15:11; Deut. 23:13) The Bible reflects an understanding of how disease is spread that scientists acquired only in recent centuries. I also recognized that the laws on sexual hygiene in the book of Leviticus contributed to the general health of the nation. (Lev. 12:1-6; 15:16-24) I concluded that the Creator gave these laws to the Israelites for their welfare and that he blessed those who were obedient to his commandments. I became convinced that the Bible is inspired of God—a God whose name was unknown to me at that time.

HOW I MET MY WIFE AND FOUND JEHOVAH

While I was at university pursuing my career in medicine, I met a young lady named Lydie, with whom I fell in love. We were married in 1965 when I was halfway through my studies. By 1971, Lydie and I already had three of our six children. Lydie has been a wonderful support to me, both in my work as a doctor and within our family.

I worked in a hospital for three years before setting up the clinic. Shortly afterward, a married couple, the two new patients mentioned at the outset, came looking for treatment. I was about to write a prescription for the husband when the wife requested: “Please, Doctor, no blood in the medicine.” Surprised, I asked: “Really? Why?” She replied: “We are Jehovah’s Witnesses.” I had never heard of Jehovah’s Witnesses or their stand on blood. The lady took out her Bible and showed me the Scriptural basis for their decision not to take blood. (Acts 15:28, 29) Then she and her husband went on to show me what God’s Kingdom will accomplish; it will do away with suffering, sickness, and death. (Rev. 21: 3, 4) “What you are telling me is my childhood dream come true!” I exclaimed. “I became a doctor to relieve suffering.” I was so enthusiastic that we conversed for an hour and a half. By the time the couple left, in my heart I was no longer a Catholic, and I learned that the Creator I so admired had a name—Jehovah!

I met with the Witness couple three times in my clinic, and each time we talked

for over an hour. I invited them to my home so that we could have more time to discuss the Bible. Although Lydie agreed to join us for the Bible study, she would not admit that some of the Catholic doctrines we had been taught were wrong. Therefore, I invited a parish priest to our home. We debated church teaching late into the night, using only the Bible. That discussion convinced Lydie that Jehovah’s Witnesses were teaching the truth. Thereafter, our love for Jehovah God grew to the point that we both got baptized in 1974.

PUTTING JEHOVAH FIRST

What I learned about God’s purpose for mankind had a profound effect on my priorities. For Lydie and me, serving Jehovah became the focus of our life. We were determined to raise our children according to Bible standards. We made the principles of love of God and love of neighbor the unifying force in our family.—Matt. 22:37-39.

Looking back, Lydie and I often laugh about how our children perceived our unity as parents. They knew that Jesus’ instruction to “let your word ‘Yes’ mean yes, your

**We continue to
enjoy preaching
the good news of
God’s Kingdom**



‘No,’ no” was the rule in our home. (Matt. 5:37) For example, when one of our daughters was 17, Lydie did not allow her to go out with a group of young ones. Someone from the group said to our daughter, “If your mother won’t let you go, ask your father!” But our daughter replied: “There is no point in doing that. They are always in agreement.” Yes, our six children saw that we were united in applying Bible principles. We are grateful to Jehovah that today we have a large extended family of servants of Jehovah.

Although the truth had changed my priorities, I wanted to use my love of medicine to benefit God’s people. Therefore, I volunteered to serve as a doctor at the Bethel home in Paris and later at the new Bethel home in Louviers. I have been commuting to Bethel for almost 50 years. During this time, I have made some very dear friends among the Bethel family, some of whom are now in their 90’s. I also enjoyed a nice surprise one day when I met a new Bethelite. I learned that I had delivered him some 20 years earlier!

I HAVE SEEN HOW MUCH JEHOVAH CARES FOR HIS PEOPLE

Over the years, my love for Jehovah has grown as I have observed how he guides and protects his people through his organization. In the early 1980’s, the Governing Body set up a program in the United States to establish better communication between Jehovah’s Witnesses and the medical community.

Then in 1988, the Governing Body set up a new Bethel department called Hospital Information Services. Initially, this department supervised the Hospital Liaison Committees (HLC) created in the United States to help Witness patients find suitable health care. When this arrangement was extended worldwide, the HLCs were set up in France.



With Lydie, 2021

I marvel to see how Jehovah’s organization lovingly supports sick brothers and sisters in their time of need!

A DREAM COME TRUE

Medicine was my first love. But as I analyzed my priorities, I came to realize that the most important healing is of a spiritual kind—helping people to reconcile with the Source of life, Jehovah God. Following my retirement, Lydie and I spent many hours each month preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom as regular pioneers. We still share to the extent possible in this lifesaving work.

I continue to do what I can to provide temporary relief to the sick. But I realize that even the best doctor is incapable of healing all sicknesses or of preventing death. So I look forward to the time when pain, sickness, and death will be no more. In that rapidly approaching new world, I will have eternity before me to learn more about God’s creation, including the marvelous way he designed the human body. Indeed, my childhood dream has been only partly fulfilled. I am convinced that the best is yet to come!

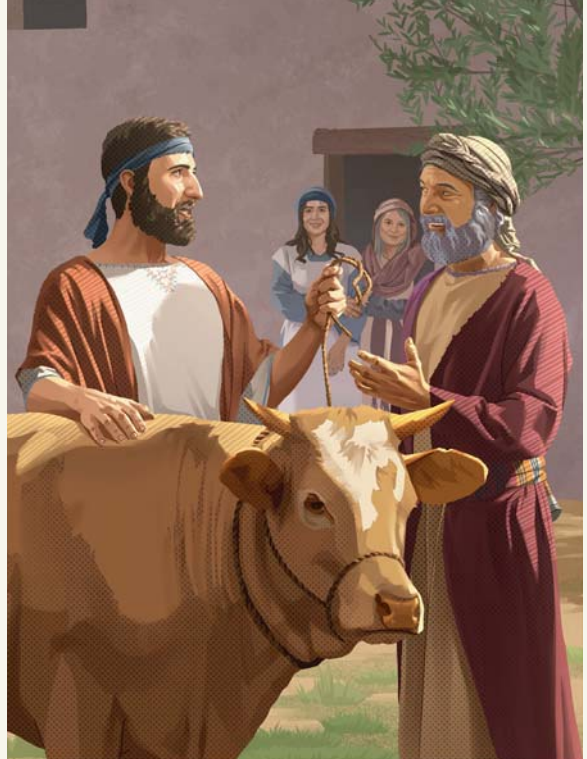
Why did the ancient Israelites pay a bride-price?

IN BIBLE times, the bride-price was given to the bride's family at the time of a marriage arrangement. The bride-price may have included objects of value, animals, or money. At times, it was paid by performing labor, such as in the case of Jacob, who agreed to work for Rachel's father for seven years in exchange for her hand in marriage. (Gen. 29:17, 18, 20) What was the purpose of this custom?

Bible scholar Carol Meyers notes: "A bride-price might compensate the bride's family for the loss of a daughter's labor, which was important in [agricultural] families." The bride-price may also have served to strengthen the bond of friendship between the families now related by marriage. Those family ties could become a means of finding help during hard times. In addition, the bride-price established that a woman was engaged and that she would be moving from the care and protection of her father to that of her husband.

Paying the bride-price did not mean that the wife was an object that could be bought or sold. The book *Ancient Israel—Its Life and Institutions* states: "This obligation to pay a sum of money, or its equivalent, to the girl's family obviously gives the Israelite marriage the outward appearance of a purchase. But the [bride-price] seems to be not so much the price paid for the woman as a compensation given to the family."

Today, in some countries, people continue to follow the custom of paying a bride-price. When Christian parents request a bride-price, they let their "reasonableness become



A bride-price could include animals

known to all" by not asking for more than is reasonable. (Phil. 4:5; 1 Cor. 10:32, 33) In this way, they demonstrate that they are not "lovers of money," or greedy. (2 Tim. 3:2) In addition, when Christian parents do not request an unreasonably high bride-price, the future husband will not be forced to postpone the marriage until he has earned enough to pay the bride-price. Or the future husband will not feel obligated to give up his service as a pioneer because he must work full-time secularly to obtain the funds required to pay a very large bride-price.

In some parts of the world, the bride-price is regulated by law. Where this is the case, Christian parents abide by those laws. Why? God's Word requires Christians to be "in subjection to the superior authorities" and to obey laws that do not conflict with God's laws.—Rom. 13:1; Acts 5:29.

Why was it beneficial that both turtledoves and pigeons were acceptable as offerings?

UNDER the Law, both turtledoves and pigeons were acceptable as offerings to Jehovah. These two birds were always mentioned together in the laws about sacrifices and were interchangeable. (Lev. 1:14; 12:8; 14:30) Why was this beneficial? One reason was that turtledoves were not always readily available. Why not?

Turtledoves are migratory birds that live throughout the land of Israel during the warmer months. Each October, they migrate south to warmer countries, returning to Israel in the spring. (Song of Sol. 2:11, 12; Jer. 8:7) In ancient Israel, this meant that it was difficult for the Israelites to offer turtledoves as a sacrifice during the wintertime.

On the other hand, pigeons do not usually migrate, so they were available in Israel year-round. What is more, pigeons were domesticated. (Compare John 2:14, 16.) According to the book *Bible Plants and*

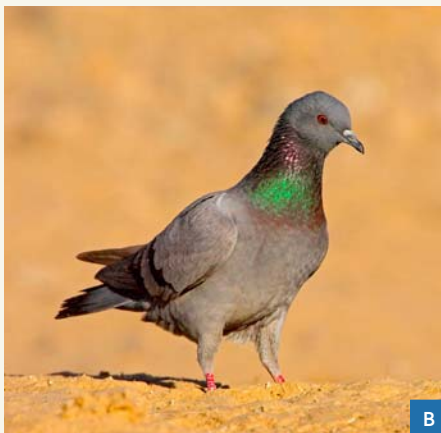
Animals, “all the villages and towns in Palestine had domesticated pigeons. Each homeowner had his dovecote, or hole in the wall, where the birds could live.”—Compare Isaiah 60:8.

Jehovah thus showed that he is both loving and reasonable by accepting as offerings birds that were readily available to the Israelites throughout the year.

A. Turtledove

B. Rock pigeon

C. Pigeon in a dovecote



IN THIS ISSUE

Study Article 6: April 4-10 2

Do You Trust in Jehovah's Way of Doing Things?

Study Article 7: April 11-17 8

"Listen to the Words of the Wise"

Study Article 8: April 18-24 14

Does Your Counsel "Make the Heart Rejoice"?

Study Article 9: April 25–May 1 20

Imitate Jesus by Serving Others

LIFE STORY 26

I Found Something Better Than Medicine

DID YOU KNOW? 30

Why did the ancient Israelites pay a bride-price?

DID YOU KNOW? 31

Why was it beneficial that both turtledoves and pigeons were acceptable as offerings?

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. To make a donation, please visit donate.jw.org.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) February 2022 is published by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; Harold L. Corkern, President; Mark L. Questell, Secretary-Treasurer; 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. © 2021 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

FEATURED CONTENT IN
JW LIBRARY AND ON [JW.ORG](https://www.jw.org)

EXPERIENCES OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

She Remains Resilient Through Personal Tragedy

Virginia has suffered from locked-in syndrome for over 23 years, but her Christian hope comforts and protects her.

In *JW Library*, go to PUBLICATIONS > ARTICLE SERIES > EXPERIENCES OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES.

On [jw.org](https://www.jw.org), go to LIBRARY > ARTICLE SERIES > EXPERIENCES OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES > COPING WITH ADVERSITY.

IMITATE THEIR FAITH

"Sing to Jehovah"!

Miriam the prophetess was inspired to lead Israel's women in a song of victory at the Red Sea. Her life is a lesson in courage, faith, and humility.

In *JW Library*, go to PUBLICATIONS > ARTICLE SERIES > IMITATE THEIR FAITH.

On [jw.org](https://www.jw.org), go to LIBRARY > ARTICLE SERIES > IMITATE THEIR FAITH.

COVER PICTURE:

Christians from Judea fled across the Jordan River to the city of Pella. Those who had reached the city earlier are distributing food supplies to fellow Christians who have just arrived (See study article 9, paragraph 13)

Visit the [jw.org](https://www.jw.org) website, or scan code



w2202-E
211007