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# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## STUDY EDITION

STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE WEEKS OF:

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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## PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

### STUDY ARTICLE 1 PAGES 8-12

No matter where we live, applying Bible principles will help us to choose forms of recreation that will be beneficial. This article will consider how we can put our choice of recreation to the test.

### STUDY ARTICLE 2 PAGES 13-17

A person's decisions regarding singleness and marriage affect not only his entire life but also his standing before Jehovah. This article will show how God's servants, single and married, can apply the Bible's counsel found in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 to their benefit in this important aspect of life.

### STUDY ARTICLES 3, 4 PAGES 23-31

In these last days, many distressing circumstances confront Jehovah's servants and others. What are some of these situations? Where can needed comfort be found? These two articles show how Jehovah and his Witnesses bring people comfort in these troubled times.

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Globe: Courtesy of Replogle Globes

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## **“Keep on the Watch” Why So Important?**

**“W**HAT will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?” (Matt. 24:3) In answer to that question, Jesus gave his disciples a sign that was clear, detailed, recognizable, and unmistakable, as recorded in Matthew chapter 24, Mark chapter 13, and Luke chapter 21. He added: “Keep on the watch.”—Matt. 24:42.

If the sign in itself was to be so evident, why this extra admonition? Consider these two possibilities. First, distractions might incline some to disregard the sign, resulting in a loss of spirituality and watchfulness. Second, a Christian might recognize particulars of the sign but because of his immediate surroundings not feel directly affected. He might then reason that the “great tribulation,” the culmination of Jesus’ prophecy, was still quite distant and that it was therefore not yet necessary to “keep on the watch.”—Matt. 24:21.

### **“They Took No Note”**

Jesus reminded his followers about Noah’s contemporaries. Noah’s preaching, the construction of the colossal ark, and the violence of the day could not have gone unnoticed. Nevertheless, most “took no note.” (Matt. 24:37-39) A similar attitude toward warnings prevails today. For example, speed-

limit signs send out an unmistakable message, yet many disregard them. Authorities often feel compelled to install speed bumps across city streets to force drivers to slow down. Likewise, a Christian may be conscious of the sign of the last days but still become involved in activities not consistent with its implication. Arielle, a West African teenager, experienced this.

Arielle enjoyed watching women’s handball on television. When her school organized a team, the prospect of playing dulled her alertness to potential dangers to her spirituality. She signed up to be a goalkeeper. What followed? She explains: “Some of my teammates had boyfriends who used drugs and smoked. They made fun of me for being different, but I thought I could handle that. Unexpectedly, the game itself began to corrode my spirituality. Handball filled my mind and heart. During Christian meetings, my thoughts often wandered from the Kingdom Hall to the handball court. My Christian personality also suffered. Love of playing shifted to a passion for winning. I practiced hard to satisfy my new competitive spirit. Stress built up. I even sacrificed friendships for handball.

“The climax came when our opponents were awarded a penalty shot in one game.





*Daily spiritual discussions help Emmanuel and his family to 'prove themselves ready'*

I was poised to defend the goal. Before I realized it, I had prayed to Jehovah to help me block the shot! This incident made me realize how much my spirituality had suffered. How did I regain it?

"I had seen our DVD *Young People Ask—What Will I Do With My Life?*\* I decided to watch it again and this time to take it seriously. After all, I was in the same predicament as André, the young man in the drama. I especially took note of what an elder had suggested that André do—read and reflect on Philippians 3:8. That did it. I quit the team.

"What a difference that made! My competitive spirit and the accompanying stress disappeared. I felt happier and closer to my Christian friends. Spiritual activities took on greater meaning. I concentrated at the meetings and enjoyed them again. My ministry also improved. Now I regularly serve as an auxiliary pioneer."

If a distraction is tugging at you to dis-

\* A modern-day drama about a Christian youth's struggle to do what is right in Jehovah's eyes.

regard the sign Jesus gave us, take serious steps, as Arielle did. You might try some of the following. Consult the *Watch Tower Publications Index*, which has been called a map to hidden treasures. References to sound counsel and first-person reports on how others have faced temptations await you. Benefit fully from Christian meetings by preparing well and taking notes. Some have found that sitting near the front of the auditorium is helpful. When there is audience participation, try to give a comment early. In addition, keep spiritually awake by matching up current news items with aspects of the sign and other characteristics of "the last days." —2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4; Rev. 6:1-8.

### **"Prove Yourselves Ready"**

The sign of the last days is international, comprising "all the inhabited earth." (Matt. 24:7, 14) Millions live in areas hard hit by pestilences, food shortages, earthquakes, and other foretold events. In contrast, many others dwell in relative peace and quiet. If you have never personally experienced some aspects of the sign, should you reason that the great tribulation is still a long way off? That would not be wise.

Reflect, for example, on what Jesus foretold about "pestilences and food shortages." (Luke 21:11) First, he did not say that these would affect all areas simultaneously or to the same degree. Rather, he stated that these would occur "in one place after another." So we cannot expect the same events everywhere at the same time. Second, shortly after mentioning food shortages, Jesus indicated that some of his followers would have to be alert not to overeat: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating." (Luke 21:34) Thus, all Christians should not expect to experience every aspect of the sign. Rather,

Jesus stated: “When you *see* these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near.” (Luke 21:31) Modern communication allows us to see all aspects of the sign, no matter what we personally experience in our locality.

Remember, too, that Jehovah has already set the “day and hour” for the great tribulation to begin. (Matt. 24:36) The progression of events on earth will not alter this date.

Jesus admonished Christians everywhere: “Prove yourselves ready.” (Matt. 24:44) We should *always* be ready. Of course, we cannot engage in theocratic activities all day long every day. Besides, none of us know what we will be doing the moment the great tribulation begins. Some may be working in a field or caring for domestic chores. (Matt. 24:40, 41) So, what can we do to prove ourselves ready?

Emmanuel, Victorine, and their six daughters live in an area of Africa where they do not feel the full thrust of all the events marking

the sign. So they decided to have a spiritual discussion *every day* to help prove themselves ready. Emmanuel explains: “It was difficult to find a time convenient to all. We finally chose the half hour between six and six-thirty in the morning. After considering the day’s text, we prepare a few paragraphs in one of the publications scheduled for congregation study during the week.” Has this program helped them to stay awake? Indeed! Emmanuel is coordinator of the body of elders in the congregation. Victorine often serves as an auxiliary pioneer and has helped many to accept the truth. Their daughters are all progressing well spiritually.

Jesus admonishes us: “Keep looking, keep awake.” (Mark 13:33) Do not allow a distraction to diminish your spiritual alertness. Rather, take note of the fine counsel in our publications and at congregation meetings, as Arielle did. Like Emmanuel’s family, try to do something every day to prove yourself ready and “keep on the watch.”

## *Let Us Rejoice Together!*

**H**APPINESS and joy are increasingly difficult to attain. For many, sharing positive sentiments with others seems almost impossible. Modern-day life, especially in big cities, causes people to withdraw into themselves and become isolated.

“Loneliness is a very common condition,” says Professor of Psychobiology Alberto Oliverio, and “there is no doubt that life in large built-up areas facilitates isolation. In many situations, it causes us to ignore the

personal life of an office colleague, a neighbor, or the checkout clerk who works at the neighborhood supermarket.” Such isolation often leads to depression.

The situation of fellow Christians, however, is different, and so is their spirit. The apostle Paul wrote: “Always be rejoicing.” (1 Thess. 5:16) There are many reasons for us to be joyful and to rejoice together. We worship the Most High God, Jehovah; we understand the Bible’s message of truth; we have

the hope of salvation and eternal life; and we can also help others to attain the same blessings.—Ps. 106:4, 5; Jer. 15:16; Rom. 12:12.

Rejoicing and sharing one's joy are characteristics of true Christians. So it is not surprising that Paul wrote to the Philippians: "I am glad and I rejoice with all of you. Now in the same way you yourselves also be glad and rejoice with me." (Phil. 2:17, 18) Here, in the space of just a few words, Paul twice speaks of being glad and rejoicing with one another.

Christians, of course, need to be careful to avoid any tendency to isolate themselves. No one who cuts himself off can rejoice with fellow believers. So how can we follow Paul's exhortation to "continue rejoicing in the Lord" with our brothers?—Phil. 3:1.

### Rejoice With Fellow Believers

When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, he was probably a prisoner in Rome as a result of his preaching activities. (Phil. 1:7; 4:22) Yet, imprisonment did not dampen his enthusiasm for the ministry. On the contrary, he rejoiced to serve Jehovah to the fullest extent possible and to be "poured out like

a drink offering." (Phil. 2:17) Paul's attitude shows that joy does not depend on one's circumstances. Despite confinement, he said: "I will also keep on rejoicing."—Phil. 1:18.

Paul had established the congregation in Philippi and felt particular affection for his brothers there. He knew that sharing the joy he found in serving Jehovah would be encouraging for them too. Hence, he wrote: "Now I desire you to know, brothers, that my affairs have turned out for the advancement of the good news rather than otherwise, so that my bonds have become public knowledge in association with Christ among all the Praetorian Guard and all the rest." (Phil. 1:12, 13) Paul's sharing this encouraging experience was one way of his being glad and rejoicing with his brothers. The Philippians, in turn, must have rejoiced with Paul. Their doing so, however, required that they not become discouraged because of what Paul was experiencing. Rather, they needed to imitate his example. (Phil. 1:14; 3:17) The Philippians, moreover, could continue mentioning Paul in their prayers and providing him with whatever help and support they could.—Phil. 1:19; 4:14-16.





Do we show the same joyful spirit as Paul did? Do we strive to see the positive aspects of our circumstances in life and of our Christian ministry? When we are associating with our brothers, it is good to rejoice about the witnessing work. We do not have to wait for sensational experiences to do this. Maybe we were able to arouse interest in the Kingdom message with a particularly effective introduction or line of reasoning. Perhaps we had a good conversation with a householder about a selected Bible verse. Or it may simply have been that we were recognized in the territory as Jehovah's Witnesses, and this alone turned out to be a fine witness. Sharing such experiences is a way of rejoicing together.

Many of Jehovah's people have made and are still making sacrifices to get the preaching work done. Pioneers, traveling overseers, Bethelites, missionaries, and international servants expend themselves in full-time service and rejoice as they do so. Do we feel glad and rejoice with them? Then let us show our gratefulness for these dear "fellow workers for the kingdom of God." (Col. 4:11) When we are together at congregation meetings or larger Christian assemblies, we can warmly encourage them. We can also imitate their zealous example. And we can create the "opportunity" to listen to their experiences and upbuilding expressions by showing them hospitality, perhaps sharing a meal with them.—Phil. 4:10.

### **Rejoice With Those Facing Trials**

Enduring persecution and overcoming trials strengthened Paul's determination to stay faithful to Jehovah. (Col. 1:24; Jas. 1:2, 3) Knowing that the brothers in Philippi would likely face similar trials and would be encouraged by his perseverance gave him reason to be glad and to rejoice with them. Thus, he wrote: "To you the privilege was given in behalf of Christ, not only to put

your faith in him, but also to suffer in his behalf. For you have the same struggle as you saw in my case and as you now hear about in my case."—Phil. 1:29, 30.

Similarly today, Christians suffer opposition because of their witnessing. Sometimes this opposition is violent, but often it is more subtle. It might come in the form of false accusations from apostates, hostility from family members, ridicule from colleagues or schoolmates. Jesus warned that these trials should neither surprise us nor discourage us. Rather, they are reasons for rejoicing. He said: "Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake. Rejoice and leap for joy, since your reward is great in the heavens."—Matt. 5:11, 12.

We should not be scared or terrified when we hear that our brothers face harsh persecution in certain lands. On the contrary, we should rejoice over their perseverance. We can pray for them, asking Jehovah to sustain their faith and endurance. (Phil. 1:3, 4) While we may be able to do little else for those dear brothers, we can help the ones in our own congregation who are undergoing trials. We can take an interest in them and support them. We can create opportunities to rejoice with them by occasionally inviting them to join us during our Family Worship evening, by sharing with them in the preaching work, and by spending time together in recreation.

We have many reasons for rejoicing together! Let us resist this world's isolationist spirit and continue to share our joy with our brothers. By doing so, not only will we contribute to the love and unity of the congregation but we will enjoy the Christian brotherhood to the full. (Phil. 2:1, 2) Yes, "always rejoice in the Lord," for Paul urges us: "Once more I will say, Rejoice!"—Phil. 4:4.

# IS YOUR RECREATION BENEFICIAL?

*“Keep on making sure of what is acceptable to the Lord.”—EPH. 5:10.*

THROUGHOUT the Bible, we find statements indicating that Jehovah wants us not only to live but also to enjoy life. For instance, Psalm 104:14, 15 states that Jehovah is causing “food to go forth from the earth, and wine that makes the heart of mortal man rejoice, to make the face shine with oil, and bread that sustains the very heart of mortal man.” Indeed, Jehovah makes crops grow to yield grain, oil, and wine for our sustenance. But wine also ‘makes the heart rejoice.’ It goes beyond what is strictly necessary to maintain life and adds to our joy. (Eccl. 9:7; 10:19) Yes, Jehovah wants us to be joyful, our hearts filled with “good cheer.”—Acts 14:16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> There is, therefore, no reason to feel guilty when we once in a while schedule some time to “observe intently the birds of heaven” and “the lilies of the field” or to enjoy some other activities that refresh us and enrich our life. (Matt. 6:26, 28; Ps. 8:3, 4) A wholesome life is a “gift of God.” (Eccl. 3:12, 13) Viewing leisure time as part of that gift will move us to use it in a way that will bring pleasure to the Giver.\*

## Diversity and Limitations

<sup>3</sup> Those who have a balanced view of rec-

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\* In this article, the terms “recreation” and “entertainment” are used interchangeably to refer to the time we set aside for leisure activities that bring us pleasure.

1, 2. (a) How does God’s Word indicate that Jehovah wants us to enjoy life? (b) Viewing recreation as a “gift of God” will move us to do what?

3. Why is it reasonable to allow for diversity in recreation?

reation allow for diversity yet also recognize the need for limitations. Why so? To answer, let us compare entertainment with food. Popular dishes differ from one part of the world to another. In fact, what people in one area relish may be unappetizing to people elsewhere. In a similar manner, what Christians in one part of the world view as pleasant recreation may not be appealing to Christians elsewhere. Even among Christians living in the same area, what one may view as relaxing (perhaps curling up with a good book), another may view as boring; what one may view as refreshing (perhaps sightseeing on a bicycle), another may view as exhausting. Still, we accept that in such matters as food and recreation, there is room for diversity and personal preference.—Rom. 14:2-4.

<sup>4</sup> However, we also realize that allowing for diversity in recreation is not a license to indulge oneself. To illustrate, consider again the example of food. Though we may be willing to eat a variety of foods, we would not deliberately consume food that is rotten. Eating such food would go against common sense and could endanger our health. Similarly, though we may be open to a variety of forms of wholesome entertainment, we would not pursue leisure activities that are life-threatening, violent, or morally rotten. Engaging in such activities would go against Bible principles and would endanger our

4. Why do we need to set limits on the kind of recreation we choose? Illustrate.



physical or spiritual health. To make sure that we stay within reasonable limits, we do well to determine in advance whether some recreation that appeals to us is beneficial or not. (Eph. 5:10) How can we do so?

<sup>5</sup> For recreation to benefit us and be pleasing in Jehovah's eyes, it needs to meet specific standards set out in God's Word. (Ps. 86: 11) To determine whether that is the case regarding a type of recreation you may like, you might consult a simple checklist. The list is made up of three questions that can be summed up in the words *what*, *when*, and *who*. Let us consider them one at a time.

### **What Does It Include?**

<sup>6</sup> Before engaging in a form of entertainment, the first question to ask yourself is, What?—that is, 'What is the nature of the leisure activity to which I feel attracted?' As you seek the answer, it is useful to keep in mind that there are basically two categories of entertainment. To the first, we say no; to the second, maybe. What is the first? In this wicked



#### **What**

world, much entertainment is characterized by activities that flagrantly violate Bible principles or break God's laws. (1 John 5:19) True Christians say a resolute no to all such entertainment. This includes entertainment that features sadism, demonism, homosexuality, pornography, or violence or that glorifies other vile, immoral practices. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; **read Revelation 21:8.**) No matter where we may be, we prove to Jehovah that we "abhor what is wicked" by refusing to get close to such entertainment.—Rom. 12:9; 1 John 1: 5, 6.

5. How can we determine whether our recreation meets God's standards?

6. What entertainment do we need to reject, and why?

<sup>7</sup> The second category of leisure activity consists of forms of entertainment that do not center on practices that are expressly condemned in God's Word. In such cases, before choosing the entertainment, we should carefully compare the activity with Jehovah's view of what is wholesome, as expressed in Bible principles. (Prov. 4:10, 11) Then we need to make a personal decision that leaves us with a good conscience. (Gal. 6:5; 1 Tim. 1:19) How can we do so? Think of this: Before eating a new dish, we would first want to find out what its main ingredients are. Similarly, before engaging in a form of recreation, we need to investigate what its main features are.—Eph. 5:17.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, you may like sports, and that attraction is easily understood. Sports can be fun and exciting. What, though, if you are attracted to certain sports because of their aggressive competitiveness, excessive risk taking, high rates of injury, riotous celebrations, nationalistic fervor, or similar "ingredients"? After examining what is involved, you would likely decide that it would be hard to harmonize your thinking with Jehovah's way of thinking and with the message of peace and love that we preach to others. (Isa. 61:1; Gal. 5:19-21) On the other hand, if a certain leisure activity is made up of "ingredients" that are wholesome in Jehovah's eyes, then such recreation may well be beneficial and refreshing to you.—Gal. 5: 22, 23; **read Philippians 4:8.**

### **When Do I Pursue It?**

<sup>9</sup> The second question to ask yourself is, When?—that is, 'When will I engage in recreation? How much time will I spend on

7, 8. How can we evaluate the quality of a certain form of entertainment? Illustrate.

9. What is revealed by our answer to the question, 'When will I engage in recreation?'



### When

it?' Our answer to the question *what?* reveals much about our inclinations—what we find acceptable and what we find unacceptable. However, the answer to the question *when?* reflects our priorities—what we find important and what we find unimportant. How, then, can we determine whether the level of importance that we attach to our entertainment is proper?

<sup>10</sup> Jesus Christ told his followers: "You  
10, 11. How do Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 6:33 help us in deciding how much time to spend on recreation?

must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind and with your whole strength." (Mark 12:30) Therefore, our love for Jehovah comes first in our life. We demonstrate that this is the case by following Jesus' admonition: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." (Matt. 6:33) How can that statement help us in determining how much time and importance to assign to recreation?

<sup>11</sup> Note this detail: Jesus admonished us to 'keep on seeking *first* the kingdom.' He did not tell us to 'keep on seeking *only* the kingdom.' Obviously, Jesus knew that we would

*How can we follow Jesus' example in choosing our friends and our leisure activities?*



need to seek many things in life in addition to the Kingdom. We need housing, food, clothing, a basic education, employment, recreation, and the list goes on. However, among all the things that we are seeking, only one pursuit comes first—Kingdom interests. (1 Cor. 7:29-31) That fundamental truth should move us to pursue our secondary activities, including recreation, in such a way that they enable us to carry out our primary activity—caring for Kingdom interests. If we do that, limited recreation can be beneficial.

<sup>12</sup> So, then, when it comes to spending time on recreation, we do well to count the cost in advance. (Luke 14:28) We need to determine how much of our time a certain leisure activity will *cost*. Next, we must decide

12. How can the principle found at Luke 14:28 be applied to recreation?



how much of our time it is *worth*. If pursuing a form of recreation will mean neglecting such important activities as personal Bible study, family worship, attending Christian meetings, or sharing in Kingdom preaching, it is not worth the price. (Mark 8:36) But if an occasional leisure activity energizes us to keep on pursuing Kingdom interests, we may well decide that the time we spend on that type of recreation is worthwhile.

### Who Are My Companions?

<sup>13</sup> The third question to ask yourself is, Who?—that is, ‘Who are the ones I want to share my leisure activities with?’ It is important to consider this aspect of recreation. Why? Because the quality of our recreation is greatly influenced by the quality of our companions. Just as eating a meal is usually more pleasurable when you

do so in the company of good friends, engaging in recreation is often more enjoyable when you do so with good companions. Thus, it is understandable that many among us, especially young ones, enjoy recreation that is shared with others. However, to make sure that an activity will be beneficial, it is wise to determine in advance what sort of individuals to choose as companions and what sort to avoid.—2 Chron. 19:2; **read Proverbs 13:20; Jas. 4:4.**

13. Why should we carefully consider with whom we share in recreation?





## Who

<sup>14</sup> Following Jesus' example in choosing companions will be very helpful. From creation onward, Jesus had a love for humans. (Prov. 8:31) While on earth, he showed loving consideration for all kinds of people. (Matt. 15:29-37) However, Jesus drew a line between being friendly and being a close friend. While he was friendly toward people in general, he was a close friend only to those who met specific requirements. Speaking to his 11 faithful apostles, Jesus stated: "You are my friends *if* you do what I am commanding you." (John 15:14; see also John 13:27, 30.) The only individuals whom Jesus embraced as friends were those who followed him and served Jehovah.

<sup>15</sup> Hence, when you consider whether you should choose a certain individual as a close friend or not, it would be wise to keep Jesus' statement in mind. Ask yourself such questions as: 'Does this individual demonstrate in words and deeds that he is obeying the commands of Jehovah and Jesus? Does he have the same Bible-based values and morals that I have? Will being in his company encourage me to put the Kingdom first in my life and to be a loyal servant of Jehovah?' If you are sure that the answers to those

14, 15. (a) What example did Jesus set in choosing the right companions? (b) What questions should we ask ourselves regarding our companions?

## Can You Explain?

Regarding recreation, how can you apply the principles found at . . .

- Philippians 4:8?
- Matthew 6:33?
- Proverbs 13:20?

questions are yes, you have found a good companion with whom to enjoy your leisure activities.—**Read Psalm 119:63**; 2 Cor. 6:14; 2 Tim. 2:22.

## Our Recreation —Does It Pass the Test?

<sup>16</sup> We briefly considered three aspects of entertainment—quality, quantity, and company. To be beneficial, our entertainment needs to match closely the Bible-based standard for each of these aspects. Hence, before engaging in a form of recreation, we need to put it to the test. When it comes to *quality*, we want to know: 'What does it include? Is it wholesome or debased?' (Prov. 4:20-27) Regarding *quantity*, we want to find out: 'How much time would I spend on it? Is the amount appropriate or not?' (1 Tim. 4:8) And concerning *company*, we need to determine: 'With whom will I share in entertainment? Are such companions good or bad?' —Eccl. 9:18; 1 Cor. 15:33.

<sup>17</sup> If a form of entertainment fails to meet the Bible-based standards in any one of these three aspects, it does not pass the test. On the other hand, if we make sure that our leisure activities meet the Bible-based standards in all three aspects, our recreation will bring honor to Jehovah and benefits to us. —Ps. 119:33-35.

<sup>18</sup> So, then, when it comes to recreation, let us strive to do the right thing at the right time and with the right people. Yes, may it be the heartfelt desire of each one of us to follow the Bible's advice: "Whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory."—1 Cor. 10:31.

16. What do we need to determine regarding our entertainment?

17, 18. (a) How can we test ourselves to see whether our entertainment meets the Bible's standards? (b) What are you personally determined to do when it comes to your choice of entertainment?

# WISE COUNSEL ON SINGLENES AND MARRIAGE

*“This I am saying . . . to move you to that which is becoming and that which means constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction.”—1 COR. 7:35.*

**F**EW aspects of life cause more elation, frustration, or worry than our dealings with the opposite sex. The need to deal effectively with such emotions is reason enough for us to seek divine guidance, but there are other motives for doing so. A Christian who is content with being single may feel that his family or friends are pressuring him to get married. Another may want to get married but has not yet found a suitable mate. Some need direction on how to prepare for the responsibilities of being a husband or a wife. And both single and married Christians face tests regarding sexual morality.

<sup>2</sup> Apart from our personal happiness, these issues affect our standing before Jehovah God. In chapter 7 of his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul gave guidance on singleness and marriage. His aim was to motivate his readers to “that which is becoming and that which means constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction.” (1 Cor. 7:35) As you consider his counsel on these important matters, try to see your situation—single or married—as a way to serve Jehovah more fully.

## A Weighty Personal Decision

<sup>3</sup> Like Jewish society in the first century,

1, 2. Why should a person search out Bible counsel on singleness and marriage?

3, 4. (a) How do difficulties sometimes arise when people are overly concerned about an unmarried friend or relative? (b) How should Paul’s counsel help a person to have a balanced view of marriage?

many cultures today emphasize marriage as being most desirable. If a young man or woman passes a certain age without getting married, concerned friends and relatives may feel impelled to give him or her some advice. In conversation, they may suggest that he or she search more actively for a mate. They may drop hints about an eligible member of the opposite sex. They may even use cunning to get two unmarried people to meet. These actions sometimes lead to embarrassment, broken friendships, and hurt feelings.

<sup>4</sup> Paul never pressured others either to marry or to remain single. (1 Cor. 7:7) He was content to serve Jehovah without a wife, but he respected the right of others to enjoy marriage. Individual Christians today also have the right to decide for themselves whether to get married or to stay single. Others should not pressure them to take one course or another.

## Making a Success of Singleness

<sup>5</sup> A notable feature of Paul’s words to the Corinthians is his positive view of singleness. (**Read 1 Corinthians 7:8.**) Although Paul was unmarried, he did not exalt himself over those who were married, as the celibate clergy of Christendom do. Rather, the apostle highlighted an advantage that many unmarried ministers of the good news enjoy. What is that advantage?

5, 6. Why did Paul recommend singleness?



*Joy comes to unmarried Christians who use their time to expand their ministry*

<sup>6</sup> A single Christian often has the flexibility to accept assignments in Jehovah's service that might be out of reach for a married person. Paul received a special privilege as "an apostle to the nations." (Rom. 11:13) Read Acts chapters 13 through 20, and follow him and his fellow missionaries as they open up territories and establish congregations in one place after another. In his service, Paul endured hardships that few today will face. (2 Cor. 11:23-27, 32, 33) But his joy in helping many to become disciples made those difficulties worthwhile. (1 Thess. 1:2-7, 9; 2:19) Would he have accomplished all that he did had he been married or had a family? Probably not.

<sup>7</sup> Many unmarried Christians use their current circumstances to accomplish much in behalf of the Kingdom. Sara and Limbania, single pioneers in Bolivia, moved to a village where the people had not received a witness for years. Would the lack of electric-

ity be a problem? They reported: "There is no radio or TV, so the people are not distracted from their main pastime, which is reading." Some villagers showed the pioneers copies of publications of Jehovah's Witnesses that they were still reading but that were long out of print. Because the sisters found interest at almost every door, they had difficulty calling on every household in the territory. One elderly woman told them: "The end must be near because Jehovah's Witnesses have reached us at last." Some in that village were soon attending congregation meetings.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, married Christians also have fine results when preaching the good news in challenging territories. But some assignments open to single pioneers might prove difficult for those who are married or who have children. Paul thought about the potential he observed for advancing the good news among the local congregations. He

7. Give an example of unmarried Witnesses who have used their circumstances to further Kingdom interests.

8, 9. (a) What did Paul have in mind when he spoke favorably of singleness? (b) What advantages do unmarried Christians have?



wanted all to have joy, as he did. For that reason, he spoke favorably of serving Jehovah as a single person.

<sup>9</sup> A single pioneer sister from the United States wrote: “Some people believe that happiness is unattainable for the unmarried. But I have seen that lasting happiness depends on a person’s friendship with Jehovah. Singleness, though it is a sacrifice, is an amazing gift if you take advantage of it.” Regarding finding happiness, she wrote: “Singleness can be a springboard to happiness, not a hindrance. I know that Jehovah excludes no one, single or married, from his tender affections.” She now happily serves in a land where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers. If you are single, can you use your freedom to expand your share in teaching others the truth? You too may find singleness to be a priceless gift from Jehovah.

### Single Ones Who Wish to Marry

<sup>10</sup> After spending some time single, many of Jehovah’s faithful servants decide to look for a marriage partner. Conscious of the need for guidance, they ask Jehovah for help to find a suitable mate.—**Read 1 Corinthians 7:36.**

<sup>11</sup> If you hope to marry someone who shares your desire to serve Jehovah wholeheartedly, keep this matter before Him in prayer. (Phil. 4:6, 7) Regardless of how long you may need to wait, do not despair. Trust in our loving God as your Helper, and he will support you emotionally in harmony with your need.—Heb. 13:6.

<sup>12</sup> A single Christian desiring to get married may receive a proposal from someone

10, 11. How does Jehovah support those who hope to marry but have not yet found a suitable mate?

12. Why should a Christian weigh a proposal of marriage carefully?

of doubtful spirituality or even from an unbeliever. If that happens to you, remember that the heartache that results from making a bad choice in a marriage mate can cause greater pain by far than the longing that a person feels while single. And once married, for better or for worse, you are bound to your mate for life. (1 Cor. 7:27) Do not out of desperation make a decision to marry that you will later regret.—**Read 1 Corinthians 7:39.**

### Prepare for the Realities of Marriage

<sup>13</sup> Although Paul recommended serving Jehovah as a single person, he did not look down on those who decided to marry. Rather, his inspired counsel assists couples to face the realities of married life and to make their union permanent.

<sup>14</sup> Some couples need to adjust their expectations for the future. As they court, two people may come to see their love as unique, extraordinary, a guarantee of marital bliss. They enter marriage carried along by dreamy emotion and believe that nothing can ever destroy their happiness together. Such thinking is unrealistic. The romantic aspects of married life are delightful, but they alone do not equip a bride and groom for the tribulation that comes with every marriage.—**Read 1 Corinthians 7:28.\***

<sup>15</sup> Many newlyweds are surprised, even disappointed, when their mates differ with them on important issues. The two may find themselves at odds on how they should spend money and leisure time, where they will live, and how often they should visit

\* See *The Secret of Family Happiness*, chapter 2, paragraphs 16-19.

13-15. What possible sources of tribulation in marriage should a couple discuss during courtship?

the in-laws. And each one has personality flaws that can irritate the other. During courtship, it is easy to make light of the importance of such matters, but they can later put great strain on a marriage. A couple do well to resolve areas of concern before they marry.

<sup>16</sup> To be successful and happy, a couple must face their challenges unitedly. They should agree on how to discipline their children and how to care for aging parents. The pressure caused by family difficulties should not push the two apart. By applying Bible counsel, they will solve many problems, endure those that remain, and stay happy together.—1 Cor. 7:10, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Paul states another reality of marriage

16. Why should a couple agree on how to face the challenges of married life?

17. What concern for “the things of the world” should a couple expect to have?

at 1 Corinthians 7:32-34. (**Read.**) Married people are by necessity “anxious for the things of the world,” such as food, clothing, shelter, and other nonspiritual matters. Why is this so? When single, a brother may have poured himself into the ministry. But as a husband, he finds that he must use some of that time and energy to care for his wife and thus gain her approval. The same is true of the wife toward her husband. In his wisdom, Jehovah recognizes this need. He knows that a successful marriage often demands some of the time and energy that the husband and wife formerly used in His service when they were single.

<sup>18</sup> But the lesson goes further. If a couple must divert some time and energy from God’s service to care for each other, should they not do likewise with resources formerly

18. What adjustments regarding social activities may some have to make after marriage?

### *What adjustments may some have to make after marriage?*



used for socializing as single people? What would be the effect on a wife if a husband remained deeply involved in sports with his friends? Or how might a husband feel if a wife kept devoting much time to hobbies with her friends? The neglected mate might soon feel lonely, unhappy, and unloved. This can be avoided if those marrying do all they can to strengthen their bond as husband and wife.—Eph. 5:31.

### Jehovah Requires Moral Cleanness

<sup>19</sup> Servants of Jehovah are resolved to remain morally chaste. Some decide to marry so as to avoid problems in this area. Marriage, though, does not furnish automatic protection against sexual uncleanness. In Bible times, a fortified city protected the people only if they remained inside its walls. If a person went outside the gate when bandits and marauders were roaming about, he could be robbed or killed. Likewise, married people find protection from immorality only if they stay within the sexual bounds that the Originator of marriage has established for them.

<sup>20</sup> Paul described those bounds at 1 Corinthians 7:2-5. Sexual relations with her husband become the exclusive privilege of the wife; he likewise has the same privilege with her alone. Each is expected to provide the other with the marital “due,” or sexual relations that a married person has the right to receive. However, some husbands and wives spend long periods of time apart—taking separate vacations or being away from each other because of secular work, thus depriving each other of the “due.” Imagine the tragedy if because of the “lack of self-

19, 20. (a) Why are married people not free of temptation to be immoral? (b) What risk does a married couple take if they allow themselves to be separated for long periods of time?

regulation,” a person yields to satanic pressure and commits adultery. Jehovah blesses family heads who provide for their families without risking their marriages.—Ps. 37:25.

### Benefits of Obeying Bible Counsel

<sup>21</sup> Decisions involving singleness and marriage are among the most difficult that a person will ever make. Imperfection, the source of most problems in human relations, is present in all people. So even those favored and blessed by Jehovah cannot fully escape disappointment, whether single or married. If you apply the wise counsel found in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, you can keep such problems to a minimum. In Jehovah’s eyes you will “do well,” whether you are single or married. (*Read 1 Corinthians 7:37, 38.*) Having God’s approval is the greatest goal that you can achieve. With his favor, you will continue progressing toward life in his new world. There, relationships between men and women will be free of the pressures so common today.

21. (a) Why are decisions on singleness and marriage difficult to make? (b) Why is the counsel in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 useful?

### Can You Answer?

- Why should no one pressure another to get married?
- How can you make the best use of your time as a single servant of Jehovah?
- How can a courting couple prepare for the challenges of marriage?
- Why does marriage not offer automatic protection against sexual immorality?





# SERVING JEHOVAH HAS BEEN MY DELIGHT

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AS TOLD BY  
FRED RUSK

*I experienced early in life the truth of David's words found at Psalm 27:10: "In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up." Let me relate how this came true for me.*

I GREW UP on my grandfather's cotton farm in the state of Georgia, U.S.A., during the Great Depression of the 1930's. My father, who was devastated by the death of my mother and newborn brother, left me with his widowed dad and moved to a distant city for employment. Later, he made attempts to have me join him, but these never worked out.

Grandfather's older daughters managed the household. Although he was not a religious man, his daughters were strict Southern Baptists. Under threat of a beating, I was forced to attend church every Sunday. So from an early age, I had little regard for religion. I did, however, enjoy school and sports.

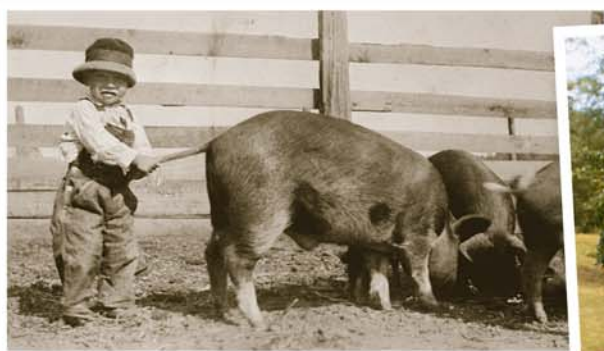
## **The Visit That Changed My Life**

One afternoon in 1941, when I was 15, an elderly man and his wife came to our home. He was introduced as "your uncle Talmadge Rusk." I had never heard of him but learned that he and his wife were Jehovah's Witnesses. What he explained about God's purpose

for humans to live on the earth forever was much different from what I had heard in church. Most of the family rejected—even despised—what they said. They were never again allowed into the home. However, my aunt Mary, only three years older than me, accepted a Bible along with publications that helped to explain it.

Mary was quickly convinced that she had found Bible truth and was baptized in 1942 as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. She also experienced what Jesus had foretold, namely: "A man's enemies will be persons of his own household." (Matt. 10:34-36) Family opposition was intense. An older sister, prominent in county affairs, conspired with the mayor and had Uncle Talmadge arrested. The charge was peddling without a license. He was convicted.

Our hometown newspaper reported that the mayor, who was also the judge, said to those in the city court: "The literature this man is distributing . . . is as dangerous as poison." My uncle won the case on appeal, but he spent ten days in jail in the meantime.



*On my grandfather's cotton farm in Georgia, U.S.A., 1928*



*Aunt Mary and Uncle Talmadge*

### How Aunt Mary Helped Me

In addition to speaking to me about her newfound beliefs, Mary began witnessing to the neighbors. I went with her on a Bible study that she conducted with a man who had accepted the book *The New World*.<sup>\*</sup> His wife said that her husband had stayed up all night reading it. Although I did not want to be quickly drawn into anything religious, what I was learning appealed to me. However, it was not primarily Bible teachings that convinced me that the Witnesses were God's people. It was how they were treated.

For example, on the way home from hoeing tomatoes one day, Mary and I found evidence in the smoldering incinerator that her sisters had burned her literature, including a phonograph and records containing Bible messages. My outrage was met with the condescending response of an aunt, "You will thank us later in life for what we have done."

Mary was forced to leave home in 1943 because she refused to give up her newfound faith and stop preaching to the neigh-

bors. By then, I was thrilled to have learned that not only does God have a name, Jehovah, but he is a loving, compassionate God, not one who burns people in a fiery hell. I also learned that Jehovah has a loving organization, although I had not yet attended a meeting.

Later, while I was mowing the lawn, a car drove up slowly and one of the two men inside asked me if I was Fred. When I found out that they were Witnesses, I said, "Let me get in, and we will drive to a safe place to talk." Mary had arranged for them to call on me. One of the men was Shield Toutjian, a traveling minister who provided me with encouragement and spiritual direction at the right time. Family opposition now focused on me as I defended the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Mary wrote to me from Virginia, where she had moved, and said that if I was determined to serve Jehovah, I could come and live with her. Right away I decided to go. On a Friday evening in October 1943, I put some necessities in a box and tied it in a tree some distance from home. On Saturday, I retrieved the box, took a back route to a neighbor's house, and got a ride into town.

<sup>\*</sup> Published in 1942 but now out of print.



*Mary, Gladys,  
and Grace*



*My baptism,  
June 14, 1944*



*In the Service  
Department at Bethel*

Traveling to the city of Roanoke, I found Mary in the home of Edna Fowlkes.

### **Spiritual Growth, Baptism, Bethel**

Edna was a compassionate anointed Witness—a modern-day Lydia—who had rented a large home and taken in, besides Aunt Mary, the wife of Edna’s brother, as well as her two daughters. These girls—Gladys and Grace Gregory—later became missionaries. Gladys, now in her 90’s, still serves faithfully at the Japan branch.

While living in Edna’s home, I attended meetings regularly and received training in the ministry. Having the freedom to study God’s Word and attend Christian meetings satisfied my growing spiritual appetite. On June 14, 1944, I was baptized. Mary and the Gregory sisters began pioneering and accepted an assignment in northern Virginia. There they were instrumental in forming a congregation in Leesburg. In early 1946, I began pioneering in an adjacent county. That summer we traveled together to the memorable international convention held in Cleveland, Ohio, August 4-11.

At that convention, Nathan Knorr, who was taking the lead in the organization, out-

lined plans for expansion at Brooklyn Bethel. These included building a new residence and an addition to the printery. Many young brothers were needed. I decided that that is where I would like to serve Jehovah. So I turned in my application, and within a few months, on December 1, 1946, I went to Bethel.

About a year later, the printery overseer, Max Larson, stopped at my desk in the Mailing Department. He informed me that I was being assigned to the Service Department. In that assignment, I learned much about the application of Bible principles and the functions of God’s organization, especially while working with T. J. (Bud) Sullivan, the department overseer.

My father visited me several times at Bethel. In later life, he had become religious. On his last visit, in 1965, he said, “You may come to visit me, but I will never come to see you here again.” I did visit him a few times before he died. He was sure he was going to heaven. My hope is that he is in Jehovah’s memory, and if so, at resurrection time he will be, not where he thought he would be, but here on the earth with the hope of living forever in the restored Paradise.

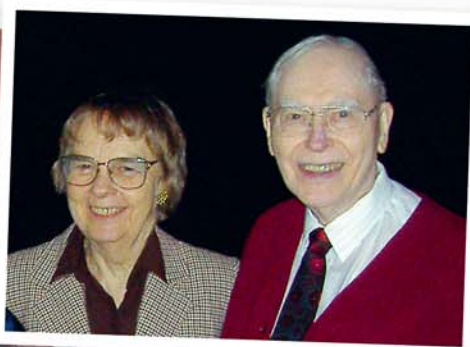




*With Mary at the 1958  
international convention  
at Yankee Stadium*



*With Marjorie  
on our wedding day*



*Together in 2008*

### **Other Memorable Conventions and Construction**

Conventions were always milestones of spiritual growth. The international ones at New York's Yankee Stadium in the 1950's were especially so. During one session in 1958, Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds were packed with 253,922 from 123 lands. One incident at that convention, I will never forget. While I was assisting in the convention office, Brother Knorr approached me at a fast pace. "Fred," he said, "somehow I overlooked assigning a brother to speak to all the pioneers now assembled in a rented banquet hall nearby. Would you rush over and give them a good talk based on what you think about on the way?" I prayed a lot before I arrived there, out of breath.

As the number of congregations increased dramatically in New York City in the 1950's and 1960's, rented facilities for Kingdom Halls became inadequate. So from 1970 to 1990, three buildings were purchased and remodeled in Manhattan to provide suitable meeting places. I was chairman of the building committees for these projects and have many pleasant memories of how Jehovah richly blessed the congregations

involved in working together to finance and complete these buildings that continue to serve so well as centers of true worship.

### **Changes in Life**

One day in 1957, while I was walking to work through the park between the Bethel Home and the printery, it started to rain. I saw a lovely blonde new Bethelite girl ahead of me. She did not have an umbrella, so I offered to share mine. That's how I met Marjorie, and since our wedding in 1960, we have been walking happily together in Jehovah's service, rain or shine. We celebrated our 50th year of marriage in September 2010.

We had hardly unpacked from our honeymoon when Brother Knorr told me that I had been assigned to be an instructor at Gil-ead School. What a special privilege that was! From 1961 to 1965, five longer classes were made up mainly of branch personnel who were given special training in branch management. In the fall of 1965, classes returned to being five months in length, and once again the focus was on training missionaries.

In 1972, I was transferred from Gilead School to the Writing Correspondence Department, where I served as the overseer. Doing research to handle a variety of questions and problems has helped me to understand better the teachings of God's Word and the application of the lofty principles of our God in assisting others.

Then, in 1987, I was assigned to a new department called Hospital Information Services. Seminars were arranged to teach elders on Hospital Liaison Committees how to approach doctors, judges, and social workers to discuss our Scriptural stand on blood. A big problem was that doctors were arbitrarily giving blood transfusions to our children, often getting court orders to do so.

When alternatives to blood transfusions were suggested to doctors, the usual reply was that such were not available or were too expensive. My response to a surgeon who said that would often be, "Hold out your hand, please." When he did, I would say, "You know, you possess there one of the best alternatives to blood." This compliment reminded him of what he was well-aware of—that careful use of the scalpel keeps blood loss to a minimum.

During the past two decades, Jehovah has richly blessed these efforts to educate doctors and judges. Their attitudes changed significantly when they came to understand our position better. They learned that medical research proves that alternatives to blood are effective and that there are many co-operative doctors as well as hospitals to which a patient might be transferred.

Since 1996, Marjorie and I have been serving at the Watchtower Educational Center in Patterson, New York, located about 70 miles (110 km) north of Brooklyn. Here I worked briefly in the Service Department and then for a time shared in teaching

branch personnel and traveling overseers. For the past 12 years, I have again served as the overseer of Writing Correspondence, which had been transferred from Brooklyn to Patterson.

### Challenges of Old Age

Caring for my privileges of service at Bethel has become more difficult as I have reached my mid-80's. I have battled cancer for more than ten years. I feel like Hezekiah, to whom Jehovah granted an extension of his life. (Isa. 38:5) My wife too has failing health, and we work together to cope with her Alzheimer's disease. Marjorie has been a capable minister of Jehovah, a mentor to young ones, and a faithful helper and loyal companion to me. She was always a good student of the Bible and a fine teacher of it, and many spiritual children keep in touch with us.

My aunt Mary died in March 2010 at 87. She excelled as a teacher of God's Word and helped others to take their stand for true worship. She spent many years in the full-time ministry. I am very grateful to her for the part she played in helping me to learn the truth of God's Word and to become like her, a servant of our loving God, Jehovah. Mary is buried beside her husband, who earlier served as a missionary in Israel. I am confident that they are in Jehovah's memory awaiting the resurrection.

As I look back over 67 years of serving Jehovah, I am thankful for the rich blessings I have received. It has been my delight to do Jehovah's will! Having trusted in his undeserved kindness, I fervently hope to share in the promise of his Son: "Everyone that has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive many times more and will *inherit everlasting life*."—Matt. 19:29.

# TRUST IN JEHOVAH, “THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT”

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort.”—2 COR. 1:3.*

**F**ROM our birth on, we feel the need for comfort. A baby uses its vocal cords to let us know when it needs comfort. Perhaps it wants to be held or it is hungry. Even when we are older, we often feel the need to be comforted. Especially is this the case when we are experiencing difficult situations.

<sup>2</sup> Family members and friends can often give us a degree of comfort. At times, however, conditions that cause us distress are beyond human remedies. Only God can give us comfort regardless of how distressing our situation may be. His Word assures us: “Jehovah is near to all those calling upon him, . . . and their cry for help he will hear.” (Ps. 145:18, 19) Yes, “the eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their cry for help.” (Ps. 34:15) But if we are to receive God’s support and comfort, we must place our trust in him. The psalmist David made that clear when he sang: “Jehovah will become a secure height for anyone crushed, a secure height in times of distress. And those knowing your name will trust in you, for you will certainly not leave those looking for you, O Jehovah.”—Ps. 9:9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Jehovah’s worshippers are precious to him. Jesus made this clear when he said: “Five sparrows sell for two coins of small value, do they not? Yet not one of them goes

forgotten before God. But even the hairs of your heads are all numbered. Have no fear; you are worth more than many sparrows.” (Luke 12:6, 7) Through the prophet Jeremiah, Jehovah told His ancient people: “With a love to time indefinite I have loved you. That is why I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”—Jer. 31:3.

<sup>4</sup> Trusting in Jehovah and in the fulfillment of his promises can bring us comfort in times of distress. We should therefore have the same trust in God as that expressed by Joshua, who declared: “Not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed.” (Josh. 23:14) Moreover, we can be certain that even if we are temporarily crushed by trying situations, “God is faithful” and will never forsake his loyal servants.  
—**Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.**

<sup>5</sup> The apostle Paul refers to Jehovah as “the God of all comfort.” “To comfort” means to soothe someone who is in distress or who is sorrowing. This is done by easing his misery or grief and bringing him consolation. Jehovah certainly does this. (**Read 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.**) Our heavenly Father is not limited by anything or anyone and therefore has at his disposal whatever means are needed to provide comfort for those who love him. In turn, we are able to comfort

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1. Regardless of age, what need do humans have?
  2. What assurance does Jehovah give that he will comfort those who trust in him?
  3. How did Jesus illustrate Jehovah’s love for His people?

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4. Why can we trust in Jehovah’s promises?
  5. How is it possible for us to comfort others?



fellow believers “in any sort of tribulation.” We can do so “through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God.” How well this expresses Jehovah’s unmatched ability to comfort despairing ones!

### **Coping With the Causes of Distress**

<sup>6</sup> We need comfort in many areas of life. One of the greatest causes of grief is the loss of a loved one in death, especially a beloved marriage mate or a child. Comfort may also be needed because a person is a victim of discrimination or prejudice. Poor health, advanced age, poverty, marital problems, or distressing world conditions can give rise to a personal need for comfort.

<sup>7</sup> In times of distress, we may need comfort that soothes our heart, our mind, our emotions, and both our physical and spiritual health. For example, consider the *heart*. God’s Word acknowledges that our heart can be “broken and crushed.” (Ps. 51:17) Jehovah is certainly able to deal with this situation, for “he is healing the brokenhearted ones, and is binding up their painful spots.” (Ps. 147:3) Even in severe situations, God can bring relief to a stricken heart if we pray to him in full faith and observe his commandments.—**Read 1 John 3:19-22; 5:14, 15.**

<sup>8</sup> Our *mind* often needs comfort because various trials can cause great mental distress. In our own strength, we likely cannot cope with these tests of faith. However, the psalmist sang: “When my disquieting thoughts became many inside of me, your own consolations began to fondle my soul.” (Ps. 94:19) Moreover, Paul wrote: “Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by

prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6, 7) Reading and meditating on the Scriptures can be of great help in coping with mental distress.—2 Tim. 3:15-17.

<sup>9</sup> At times, we may become so discouraged that we can be in danger of succumbing to the effects of negative *emotions*. Perhaps we feel unable to care for a certain Scriptural responsibility or privilege of service. Here, too, Jehovah can comfort and help us. To illustrate: When Joshua was commissioned to lead the Israelites against powerful enemy nations, Moses told the people: “Be courageous and strong. Do not be afraid or suffer a shock before them, because Jehovah your God is the one marching with you. He will neither desert you nor leave you entirely.” (Deut. 31:6) With Jehovah’s backing, Joshua was able to lead God’s people into the Promised Land and to victory over all their enemies. Earlier at the Red Sea, Moses had experienced similar divine support.—Ex. 14:13, 14, 29-31.

<sup>10</sup> Distressing events can have a negative effect on our *physical health*. Of course, eating properly, getting sufficient rest and exercise, and keeping clean can have a good effect on us. A spiritually healthy Bible-based outlook may well affect our body for the good. Thus, it is helpful when going through some anguish that we bear in mind Paul’s experience and encouraging words: “We are pressed in every way, but not cramped beyond movement; we are perplexed, but not absolutely with no way out; we are persecuted, but not left in the lurch;

9. How can we cope with emotional distress?

10. If our physical health is affected by distress, what help can we receive?

6. Give examples of things that can cause distress.  
7. (a) In grievous situations, what kind of comfort is needed? (b) What can Jehovah do to heal a “broken and crushed” heart?  
8. When we are distressed mentally, how can Jehovah help us?



## HOW TO COPE WITH THINGS THAT COULD AFFECT OUR . . .

- **heart** Ps. 147:3; 1 John 3:19-22; 5:14, 15
- **mind** Ps. 94:19; Phil. 4:6, 7
- **emotions** Ex. 14:13, 14; Deut. 31:6
- **physical health** 2 Cor. 4:8, 9
- **spiritual health** Ps. 145:14; Jas. 5:14, 15

we are thrown down, but not destroyed.”  
—2 Cor. 4:8, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Some trials can have a detrimental effect on our *spiritual health*. Here, too, Jehovah can come to our rescue. His Word assures us: “Jehovah is giving support to all who are falling, and is raising up all who are bowed down.” (Ps. 145:14) For help to counteract spiritual illness, we should seek the assistance of Christian elders. (Jas. 5:14, 15) And constantly keeping in mind the Scriptural hope of everlasting life can help to sustain us during tests of our faith.—John 17:3.

### Examples of God-Given Comfort

<sup>12</sup> An inspired psalmist declared: “Remember the word to your servant, for which you [Jehovah] have made me wait. This is my comfort in my affliction, for your own saying has preserved me alive.” (Ps. 119:49, 50) Today, we have Jehovah’s written Word, which contains many examples of God-given comfort. For instance, *Abraham* may have been quite distressed when he learned that Jehovah was going to destroy Sod-

om and Gomorrah. That faithful patriarch asked God: “Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked?” Jehovah comforted Abraham by assuring him that if only 50 righteous people could be found, He would not destroy Sodom. Five more times, however, Abraham asked Jehovah: What if there are only 45 righteous people? 40? 30? 20? 10? Each time, Jehovah very patiently and kindly assured Abraham that Sodom would be spared. Although there were not even ten righteous people in the area, Jehovah did preserve Lot and his daughters.—Gen. 18:22-32; 19:15, 16, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Elkanah’s wife *Hannah* greatly desired to have a child. But she was barren, and this distressed her. She prayed to Jehovah about the matter, and High Priest Eli said to her: “May the God of Israel grant your petition.” This comforted Hannah, “and her face became self-concerned no more.” (1 Sam. 1:8, 17, 18) Hannah trusted in Jehovah, confidently leaving things in his hands. Although she did not know what the outcome would be, Hannah experienced inner peace. In time, Jehovah answered her prayer. She

11. How can spiritual illness be counteracted?

12. Describe Jehovah’s comforting attitude toward Abraham.

13. How did Hannah show that she trusted in Jehovah?

became pregnant and brought a son to birth, naming him Samuel.—1 Sam. 1:20.

<sup>14</sup> King *David* of ancient Israel is another example of an individual comforted by God. Inasmuch as Jehovah “sees what the heart is,” when he selected David to be a future king of Israel, he knew that David was sincere and devoted to true worship. (1 Sam. 16:7; 2 Sam. 5:10) Later, however, David committed adultery with Bath-sheba and tried to cover up the sin by having her husband killed. When David came to realize the enormity of his sin, he prayed to Jehovah: “According to the abundance of your mercies wipe out my transgressions. Thoroughly wash me from my error, and cleanse me even from my sin. For my transgressions I myself know, and my sin is in front of me constantly.” (Ps. 51:1-3) David was truly repentant, and Jehovah forgave him. However, David had to face the consequences of his wrongdoing. (2 Sam. 12:9-12) Nevertheless, Jehovah’s mercy was a source of comfort to his humble servant.

<sup>15</sup> When on earth, *Jesus* faced many trying circumstances. God permitted these tests of faith, and Jesus maintained his integrity as a perfect man who always trusted in Jehovah and upheld His sovereignty.

14. Why did David need comfort, and to whom did he turn?

15. What help did Jehovah give Jesus just before his death?

#### How Would You Answer?

- What are some things that can cause us distress?
- How does Jehovah comfort his servants?
- If we are faced with death, what can comfort us?

When about to be betrayed and executed, Jesus prayed to Jehovah: “Let, not my will, but yours take place.” An angel then appeared to Jesus and strengthened him. (Luke 22:42, 43) God gave Jesus the comfort, strength, and support he needed at that time.

<sup>16</sup> Even if we ourselves should face death because of our firm stand as Christians, Jehovah can and will help us to maintain our integrity to him. Furthermore, we are comforted by the hope of the resurrection. And how we look forward to the day when the last enemy, death, “is to be brought to nothing”! (1 Cor. 15:26) God’s loyal servants who have died, as well as others, are in Jehovah’s infallible memory and will be resurrected. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) Confidence in Jehovah’s resurrection promise brings us comfort and a sure hope during times of persecution.

<sup>17</sup> How comforting it is to know that our loved ones now asleep in mankind’s common grave have the prospect of resuming life in a wonderful new world free of all the present-day causes of distress! And what a privilege it will be for the “great crowd” of Jehovah’s servants who survive the end of this wicked system of things to welcome and instruct those resurrected to life on earth!—Rev. 7:9, 10.

#### Underneath Are God’s Eternal Arms

<sup>18</sup> In the words of a powerful and heart-warming song, Moses assured the people of Israel: “A hiding place is the God of ancient time, and underneath are the indefinitely

16. What can God do about distress we may experience if we face death as integrity keepers?

17. How can Jehovah comfort us when a loved one dies?

18, 19. How have God’s servants been comforted when being persecuted?



lasting arms.” (Deut. 33:27) The prophet Samuel later told the Israelites: “Do not turn aside from following Jehovah, and you must serve Jehovah with all your heart. . . . Jehovah will not desert his people for the sake of his great name.” (1 Sam. 12:20-22) As long as we cling to Jehovah in true worship, he will never forsake us. He will always give us the support we need.

<sup>19</sup> God is unfailingly giving his people needed help and comfort in these critical last days. For over a century, thousands of our fellow believers throughout the world have been persecuted and imprisoned just because they served Jehovah. Their experiences prove that in times of trial, Jehovah does indeed comfort his servants. For example, one of our brothers in the former Soviet

Union was sentenced to 23 years in prison because of his faith. Even so, a way was found to get spiritual food to him so that he could be strengthened and comforted. He stated: “During all those years, I learned to trust in Jehovah and received strength from him.”—**Read 1 Peter 5:6, 7.**

<sup>20</sup> Regardless of what we may yet face, we will do well to bear in mind the psalmist’s comforting words: “Jehovah will not forsake his people.” (Ps. 94:14) Although we personally need to be comforted, we also have the grand privilege of bringing comfort to others. As we shall see in the next article, we can have a share in comforting mourning ones in this troubled world.

20. Why can we be sure that Jehovah will not abandon us?

## “COMFORT ALL THE MOURNING ONES”

*“Jehovah has anointed me . . . to comfort all the mourning ones.”—ISA. 61:1, 2.*

JESUS CHRIST said: “My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:34) In carrying out his God-given assignment, Jesus reflected his Father’s magnificent qualities. Among these is Jehovah’s great love for people. (1 John 4:7-10) The apostle Paul noted one manifestation of that love when he described Jehovah as “the God of all comfort.” (2 Cor. 1:3) Jesus demonstrated such love when he did what was foretold in Isaiah’s prophecy. (**Read Isa-**

**iah 61:1, 2.**) Jesus read from that prophecy in the synagogue at Nazareth and applied its words to himself. (Luke 4:16-21) During his entire ministry, Jesus lovingly comforted mourning ones, bringing them encouragement and peace of mind.

<sup>2</sup> All followers of Jesus need to imitate him by comforting those who mourn. (1 Cor. 11:1) Paul said: “Keep comforting one another and building one another up.” (1 Thess. 5:

2, 3. Why do Christ’s followers need to imitate him in giving comfort?

1. What did Jesus do for mourning ones, and why?



*Do you share in comforting mourning ones?*

cial elements, as well as propaganda channels. Without question, Satan the Devil is properly called “the ruler of the world” and “the god of this system of things.” (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4) Conditions throughout the earth continue to deteriorate because Satan now has great anger, knowing he has only a short period of time left before Jehovah takes him out of the

11) Especially do we need to comfort others, since mankind now faces “critical times hard to deal with.” (2 Tim. 3:1) More and more, honesthearted people throughout the world are being confronted by some whose words and actions cause grief, heartache, and sadness.

<sup>3</sup> As Bible prophecy foretold, in these last days of this wicked system of things, many are “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.” Such attitudes are now worse than ever, for ‘wicked men and impostors have advanced from bad to worse.’—2 Tim. 3:2-4, 13.

<sup>4</sup> All of this should not surprise us, since God’s Word makes it clear that “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) “The whole world” includes political, religious, and commer-

way. (Rev. 12:12) How comforting it is to know that God’s toleration of Satan and his evil system will soon end, and the issue Satan raised regarding Jehovah’s sovereignty will be settled!—Gen., chap. 3; Job, chap. 2.

### **The Good News Is Being Preached Earth Wide**

<sup>5</sup> During this difficult period of human history, what Jesus foretold is being fulfilled. He said: “This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.” (Matt. 24:14) This earth-wide witness work regarding God’s Kingdom is being done on an ever-increasing scale. Today, over 7,500,000 Witnesses of Jehovah, associated with more than 107,000 congregations throughout the earth, are preaching about God’s Kingdom, even as Jesus made it the theme of his preaching and teaching. (Matt. 4:17) As a result of our present-day preaching work, great comfort is being given to mourning ones. Why, in two recent years, a total of

4. What has happened to world conditions in our time?

5. How is the prophecy about the preaching work being fulfilled in these last days?

570,601 individuals were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses!

<sup>6</sup> The great scope of this preaching work can best be appreciated by noting that Jehovah's Witnesses now translate and distribute Bible literature in over 500 languages. Nothing like this has ever been seen in all human history! The existence, work, and growth of the earthly part of Jehovah's organization are truly extraordinary. Without the direction and help of God's powerful holy spirit, it would be impossible for such a thing to take place in this world that is under Satan's control. Because the good news is being preached throughout the inhabited earth, comfort from the Scriptures is now being enjoyed not only by our fellow believers but also by mourning ones who accept the Kingdom message.

### Comforting Fellow Worshipers

<sup>7</sup> In this world full of wickedness and suffering, we are sure to encounter some situations that cause distress. We cannot expect God to remove all sources of unhappiness or grief until he destroys this system of things. Meanwhile, as we face foretold persecution, our integrity to Jehovah is at stake as supporters of his universal sovereignty. (2 Tim. 3:12) Helped and comforted by our heavenly Father, however, we can be like anointed Christians of ancient Thessalonica, who bore persecutions and tribulations with endurance and faith.—**Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5.**

<sup>8</sup> There is no doubt that Jehovah provides

6. What do you think about the scope of our preaching activity?

7. (a) Why can we not expect Jehovah to remove all distressing situations now? (b) How do we know that it is possible for us to endure persecution and tribulation?

8. What Scriptural evidence is there that Jehovah comforts his servants?

needed comfort for his servants. For instance, when the prophet Elijah's life was threatened by wicked Queen Jezebel, that prophet lost courage and fled, even saying that he wanted to die. But instead of rebuking Elijah, Jehovah comforted him and gave him the courage to carry out his work as a prophet. (1 Ki. 19:1-21) That Jehovah comforts his people can also be seen in the experience of the first-century Christian congregation. For instance, we read of a period when "the congregation throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria entered into a period of peace, being built up." Moreover, "as it walked in the fear of Jehovah and in the comfort of the holy spirit it kept on multiplying." (Acts 9:31) How grateful we are that we too have "the comfort of the holy spirit"!

<sup>9</sup> As Christians, we have been comforted by learning about Jesus Christ and by walking in his footsteps. Jesus said: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light." (Matt. 11:28-30) Learning about Jesus' upbuilding way of treating people and then following his positive example is in itself a great help in relieving the stress that we may experience.

<sup>10</sup> We can also be comforted by fellow Christians. For example, consider how the elders in the congregation help those facing distressing situations. The disciple James wrote: "Is there anyone [spiritually] sick among you? Let him call the older

9. Why can learning about Jesus be comforting to us?

10, 11. In the congregation, who may be able to give comfort?



*Both young and old can  
be encouraging*

men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him.” With what result? “The prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him.” (Jas. 5: 14, 15) Other members of the congregation can provide comfort as well.

<sup>11</sup> Women often find it easier to talk to other women about various problems. Especially can older, more experienced sisters give much fine advice to younger sisters. These older, mature Christian women may already have gone through similar situations in their lives. Their sympathy and feminine qualities can be of much help. (**Read Titus 2:3-5.**) Of course, elders and others can and should “speak consolingly to the depressed souls” among us. (1 Thess. 5:14, 15) And it is good to bear in mind that God “comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation.”—2 Cor. 1:4.

<sup>12</sup> A very important means of being comforted is to be present at Christian meetings, where Bible discussions encourage us. We read that Judas and Silas “encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them.” (Acts 15:32) Before and after our meetings, there is up-building conversation between members of the congregation. So even if we are suffering because of some distressing situation, let us not isolate ourselves, for doing so will not

12. Why is it vital that we attend Christian meetings?



improve matters. (Prov. 18:1) Instead, we do well to follow the apostle Paul’s inspired counsel: “Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near.”—Heb. 10:24, 25.

**Draw Comfort From God’s Word**

<sup>13</sup> Whether we are baptized Christians or are individuals just beginning to learn about God and his purposes, we can find great comfort in the written Word of God. Paul wrote: “All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Rom. 15:4) The Holy Scriptures can comfort us and make us “fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) Knowing the truth about God’s purposes and having a genuine hope for the future will certainly provide great comfort. Let us, therefore,

13, 14. Show how the Scriptures can comfort us.

make full use of God's Word and Bible-based publications that can comfort us and benefit us in many ways.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus set us a fine example by using the Scriptures to instruct and comfort others. During one of his postresurrection appearances, for instance, he 'fully opened up the Scriptures' to two of his disciples. As he spoke to them, their hearts were deeply touched. (Luke 24:32) In keeping with Jesus' excellent example, the apostle Paul 'reasoned from the Scriptures.' In Beroea, his listeners "received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily." (Acts 17:2, 10, 11) How appropriate it is that we read the Bible daily, benefiting from it and from Christian publications designed to bring us comfort and hope in these troublesome times!

### **Additional Ways to Comfort Others**

<sup>15</sup> We can help and thus comfort fellow Christians in various practical ways. For instance, we might do some grocery shopping for elderly or sick fellow believers. We might help others with their chores, thus showing personal interest in them. (Phil. 2:4) Perhaps we can compliment fellow worshippers on their good qualities, such as their love, resourcefulness, courage, and faith.

<sup>16</sup> In an effort to comfort the elderly, we can visit them and listen carefully to what they tell us about their past experiences and obvious blessings in Jehovah's service. Why, this may actually encourage and comfort us! We might read the Bible or our Bible-based publications with those we visit. Perhaps we could consider the current article for the weekly *Watchtower* Study or the material that will be covered during the

15, 16. What are some things we can do to help and comfort fellow Christians?

Congregation Bible Study for the week. We might join them in watching a DVD on a Scriptural theme. Then, too, we might read or relate some encouraging experiences found in our publications.

<sup>17</sup> If we notice that a fellow worshipper of Jehovah is in need of comfort, we can mention him or her in our private prayers. (Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:12) As we personally cope with life's problems and diligently seek to comfort others, we can have the same faith and conviction as did the psalmist who sang: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." (Ps. 55:22) Indeed, Jehovah will always be there to comfort and support us as his loyal servants.

<sup>18</sup> God told his worshippers of ancient times: "I—I myself am the One that is comforting you people." (Isa. 51:12) Jehovah will do the same for us and will bless our good deeds and words as we comfort mourning ones. Whether our hope is heavenly or earthly, each of us can be comforted by Paul's words to his spirit-anointed fellow Christians: "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave everlasting comfort and good hope by means of undeserved kindness, comfort your hearts and make you firm in every good deed and word."—2 Thess. 2:16, 17.

17, 18. As Jehovah's loyal servants, why can we be sure that he will support and comfort us?

### **Do You Recall?**

- How widespread is our work of comforting mourning ones?
- What are some things we can do to comfort others?
- What Scriptural proof is there that Jehovah comforts his people?

# Questions From Readers

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**What should I do when I have a question about something I read in the Bible or when I need advice about a personal problem?**

Proverbs 2:1-5 urges each of us to “keep searching for” understanding and discernment as though we were looking for “hid treasures.” This implies that we should exert ourselves in researching answers to our Bible questions and in finding solutions to our personal problems. How can we do this?

*Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*, pages 33 through 38, analyzes “How to Do Research” by using the tools that have been provided by “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45) Page 36 explains how to use the *Watch Tower Publications Index*, each edition of which is divided into a subject index and a scripture index. This makes it possible to search either by key words or by Bible verses, whereby you will find a list of references to consult. Be patient in searching for the specific answer or direction that you need. Remember, you are looking for “hid treasures,” which takes time and effort.

Of course, there are some topics and scriptures that our publications have not specifically addressed. And even where we have commented on a particular Bible text, we may not have dealt with the specific question that you have in mind. Also, some Bible accounts raise questions because not all the details are spelled out in the Scriptures. Thus, we cannot find immediate answers to every question that arises. In such a case, we should avoid speculating about things that simply cannot be answered, lest we get involved in debating “questions for research rather than a dispensing of anything by God in connection with faith.” (1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Tim.

2:23; Titus 3:9) Neither the branch office nor world headquarters is in a position to analyze and answer all such questions that have not been considered in our literature. We can be satisfied that the Bible provides sufficient information to guide us through life but also omits enough details so as to require us to have strong faith in its divine Author.—See pages 185 to 187 of the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*.

What if you have done all you can to search out a matter that affects you personally but still have not found the direction or solution you need? Feel free to approach a mature fellow believer, perhaps one of the local elders. They have considerable Bible knowledge as well as experience in Christian living. Their



balanced help would be especially fitting if you need advice about a personal problem or decision, for they know you and are close to you and your situation. And never forget to pray to Jehovah specifically about your concerns and ask him to guide your thinking by means of his holy spirit, “for Jehovah himself gives wisdom . . . and discernment.” —Prov. 2:6; Luke 11:13.