

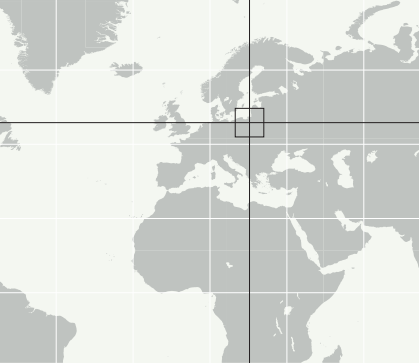
JULY 2017

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
AUGUST 28–SEPTEMBER 24, 2017



COVER IMAGE:
POLAND

In an apple orchard in Grójec, a publisher shares the Bible's message with one of the workers

PUBLISHERS
119,932

BIBLE STUDIES
50,479

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2016)
190,613

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THEY OFFERED
THEMSELVES
WILLINGLY



in Turkey



FIRST-CENTURY Christians made great efforts to reach as many people as possible with the “good news of the Kingdom.” (Matt. 24:14) Some even traveled to foreign countries. For example, the apostle Paul went to the region where modern-day Turkey is situated and preached there extensively during his missionary journeys.* Some 2,000 years later, in 2014, Turkey was once again the focus of a special preaching campaign. Why was the campaign organized? Who shared in it?

* See the brochure “See the Good Land,” pp. 32-33.



Alisa

“WHAT’S GOING ON?”

There are over 2,800 publishers in Turkey, but the country has a population of 79 million. This means that the publisher-to-population ratio in Turkey is nearly 1 to 28,000. As you can imagine, the publishers have been able to contact only a small number of the inhabitants of this country. The aim of the special preaching campaign was to reach as many people as possible in a short time. About 550 Turkish-speaking brothers and sisters from other countries traveled to Turkey and preached alongside the local publishers during the campaign. What was achieved?

A widespread witness was given. One congregation in Istanbul wrote: “When people saw us, they asked: ‘Is there a special convention here? We see Jehovah’s Witnesses everywhere!’” A congregation in the city of Izmir wrote: “A man working at a taxi stand approached a local elder and asked, ‘What’s going on? Have you increased your activity?’” Yes, the campaign was noticed.

The foreign participants thoroughly enjoyed the preaching work. **Steffen**, who is from **Denmark**, said: “Every day, I was able to preach to people who had never heard about Jehovah. I felt that I was really making Jehovah’s name known.” **Jean-David** from **France** wrote: “We preached on just one street for hours. It was wonderful! Most people didn’t know Jehovah’s Witnesses. At almost every door, we were able to start a conversation, show one of our videos, and leave literature with the householder.”

- 1 Atsuko
- 2 Stéphanie (center)
- 3 Rudy
- 4 Claire (center)
- 5 Sascha
- 6 Zeynep
- 7 Federico
- 8 Steffen



The 550 participants placed about 60,000 pieces of literature in just two weeks! The campaign did indeed result in a widespread witness.

Zeal for the ministry increased. The special activity had a motivating effect on the local brothers. Many started thinking about full-time service. In fact, the number of regular pioneers in Turkey increased by 24 percent during the 12 months following the campaign.

Participants from abroad expressed how the campaign affected their ministry even after they returned to their home countries. **Şirin**, a sister from **Germany**, wrote: “The brothers in Turkey witness informally with great ease. I am very shy when it comes to preaching informally. But thanks to the special campaign, the example of the local brothers, and many prayers, I was able to do what I couldn’t do before. I even preached and placed tracts in the subway! Now I am not as shy as before.”

“I learned some lessons for my own ministry,” said **Johannes** from **Germany**. “The brothers in Turkey really want to share the truth with as many people as possible. They give a witness at every opportunity. I decided to do the same when I returned to Germany. And now I really do preach to more people than before.”

“This campaign affected my personal ministry a lot. It helped me to be more courageous and to trust more in Jehovah,” commented **Zeynep** from **France**.

The publishers drew closer to one another. The love and unity among the brothers from different countries made a lasting impression. “We ‘tasted’ the brothers’ hospitality,” said Jean-David, mentioned earlier. He added: “They accepted us as their friends and as part of their family. They opened their homes to us. I knew that we are an international brotherhood; I had read it many times in our literature. But this time, I experienced it firsthand. I felt even more proud of being one of Jeho-



vah's people, and I thank him for this wonderful privilege."

"Whether from Denmark, France, Germany, or Turkey, we were all one family. It was as if God had rubbed out all the national borders with a big eraser," said **Claire** from **France**.

Stéphanie from **France** added: "The special campaign taught us that what unites us is not the culture or language but the love for Jehovah that we have in common."

THERE HAVE BEEN LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Many of the foreign participants began to think about moving to Turkey to help with the tremendous work still to be done there. Quite a few have already moved. These need-greaterers are very much appreciated.

Take, for example, a small isolated group of 25 publishers in one area. For many years, there was only one elder. Imagine the joy of the publishers

when in 2015, six need-greaterers from Germany and the Netherlands moved in to support them!

SERVING AT THE FRONT LINE

What do need-greaterers who have been in Turkey for a while say about their life there? Granted, at times it is challenging, but life as a need-greater is very rewarding. Consider what some have said:

"Not having many material possessions to be attached to helps me to feel free, and it allows me to concentrate on the most important things," says **Federico**, a married brother in his early 40's who moved from **Spain**. Would he recommend this type of service? "Yes, absolutely!" he says. "When you move abroad with the purpose of helping people to get to know Jehovah, you are in reality putting yourself in his hands. You really feel Jehovah's care more than ever."

"It gives us tremendous satisfaction to serve at the front line, so to speak, and to share the truth with so many people who have never heard about it

before,” says **Rudy**, a married brother in his late 50’s from **the Netherlands**. “Seeing the happiness of people when they accept the truth is a great source of joy.”

Sascha, a married brother in his early 40’s who moved from **Germany**, says: “Every time I am in the ministry, I meet people who are hearing the truth for the very first time. Giving such ones the opportunity to get to know Jehovah gives me tremendous satisfaction.”

Atsuko, a married sister in her mid-30’s from **Japan**, states: “In the past, I always wanted Armageddon to come immediately. But after having moved to Turkey, I thank Jehovah that he is still showing patience. The more I see how Jehovah directs matters, the more I desire to draw closer to him.”

Alisa, a sister in her early 30’s from **Russia**, comments: “Serving Jehovah in this kind of ministry has helped me to taste all his goodness.” (Ps. 34:8) She adds: “Jehovah is not only my Father but

also my close Friend, whom I get to know better under different circumstances. My life is full of happy moments, exciting experiences, and generous blessings!”

“VIEW THE FIELDS”

By means of the special preaching campaign in Turkey, the good news reached many more people. Yet, there is still a vast untouched territory. Every day, need-greaters who moved to Turkey meet people who have never heard about Jehovah. Would you like to serve in such a territory? If so, we encourage you: “Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting.” (John 4: 35) Could you assist in a part of the world where the fields are “white for harvesting”? If so, begin taking practical steps now toward reaching that goal. One thing is sure: Having an increased share in spreading the good news “to the most distant part of the earth” will bring you rich blessings beyond compare!—Acts 1:8.

9 Jean-David (center)

10 Şirin

11 Johannes





Seeking Riches That Are True

“Make friends for yourselves by means of the unrighteous riches.”—LUKE 16:9.

TODAY’S economic system is harsh and unfair. Young people search in vain for employment. Many risk their lives to move to more prosperous lands. Poverty is widespread, even in affluent lands. And the gap between rich and poor is widening. According to recent estimates, the richest 1 percent of the earth’s population have as much wealth as the rest of its inhabitants combined. While such a figure is difficult to confirm, no one disputes that billions of people are desperately poor, while others have enough wealth to last for many lifetimes. Jesus recognized this harsh reality with the words: “You always have the poor with you.” (Mark 14:7) Why such inequality?

² Jesus understood that the current economic system would not change until God’s Kingdom comes. Along with the political and religious elements, the greedy commercial system, represented by “the merchants” of Revelation 18:3, constitutes part of Satan’s world. Unlike the complete separation that God’s people maintain from politics and false religion,

1, 2. In this system of things, why will there always be some poor people?

SONGS: 122, 129

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

How can material possessions be used to strengthen our friendship with God?

How can we avoid becoming slaves of today’s commercial world?

Why are you determined to seek spiritual riches?

most cannot separate themselves completely from the commercial part of Satan's world.

³ As Christians, we do well to examine our view of today's commercial system by asking ourselves such questions as these: 'How can I use my material possessions to show faithfulness to God? How can I minimize involvement with the commercial world? What experiences show that God's people fully trust in him in this challenging environment?'

THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARD

⁴ **Read Luke 16:1-9.** Jesus' illustration of the unrighteous steward is thought-provoking. After being accused of wastefulness, the steward acted with "practical wisdom" to "make friends" to help him when he lost his stewardship.* Jesus, of course, was not encouraging his disciples to act in an unrighteous way in order to survive in this world. He labeled such behavior as that of "the sons of this system of things," but he used the illustration to drive home a point.

⁵ Jesus knew that like the steward who found himself in a difficult situation, most of Jesus' followers would need to make a living in this unjust commercial world. So he urges them: "Make friends for yourselves by means of the unrighteous riches, so that when such fail, they [Jehovah and Jesus] may re-

* Jesus does not indicate whether the accusation was valid. The Greek word rendered "accused" at Luke 16:1 allows for the idea that the steward was slandered. Jesus, though, focuses on the steward's reaction, not on the reasons for the dismissal.

3. What questions will we consider?

4, 5. (a) In what situation did the steward of Jesus' illustration find himself? (b) What admonition did Jesus give his followers?

ceive you into the everlasting dwelling places." What can we learn from Jesus' counsel?

⁶ Although Jesus does not explain why he calls riches "unrighteous," the Bible makes clear that commercialism was not part of God's purpose. Jehovah provided abundantly for Adam and Eve's needs in Eden. (Gen. 2:15, 16) Later, when holy spirit operated on the first-century congregation of anointed ones, "not even one of them would say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common." (Acts 4:32) The prophet Isaiah pointed to the time when all humans would freely enjoy earth's material resources. (Isa. 25:6-9; 65:21, 22) But in the meantime, Jesus' followers would need "practical wisdom" to make a living, using the "unrighteous riches" of today's world while seeking to please God.

WISE USE OF UNRIGHTEOUS RICHES

⁷ **Read Luke 16:10-13.** The steward in Jesus' illustration made friends for personal benefit. However, Jesus urged his followers to make friends in heaven for unselfish purposes. The verses that follow the illustration connect the use of "unrighteous riches" with faithfulness to God. Jesus' point was that we can 'prove ourselves faithful' with, or control, those riches once we obtain them. How so?

⁸ An obvious way to prove ourselves faithful with our material things is by contributing financially to the world-

6. How do we know that today's commercial system was not part of God's purpose?

7. What counsel is found at Luke 16:10-13?

8, 9. Give examples of how some are showing faithfulness in their use of unrighteous riches.

wide preaching work that Jesus foretold would take place. (Matt. 24:14) A young girl in India kept a small money box and gradually added coins, even giving up toys to do so. When the box was full, she handed the money over to be used for the preaching work. A brother in India who has a coconut farm contributed a large number of coconuts to the Malayalam remote translation office, reasoning that since the office needs to buy coconuts, his supplying them directly will help his contribution to go further than it would if he gave cash. That is practical wisdom. Likewise, brothers in Greece regularly contribute olive oil, cheese, and other foods for the Bethel family.

⁹ A brother from Sri Lanka, now living abroad, has made his property back home available for meetings and assemblies and for housing full-time servants. It is a financial sacrifice for the brother but a great help to the local publishers of little means. In a land where the work is restricted, brothers make their homes available for use as local Kingdom Halls, allowing many pioneers and others with limited funds to have a meeting place without a financial burden.

¹⁰ The foregoing examples show how God's people are "faithful in what is least," that is, in their use of material wealth, which is inferior to spiritual riches. (Luke 16:10) How do these friends of

10. What are some blessings we receive when we give generously?

Jehovah feel about making such sacrifices? They understand that being generous is a way to gain "true" riches. (Luke 16:11) A sister who contributes regularly to the Kingdom work tells of a blessing she has received: "By being materially generous, I have experienced an unusual phenomenon within myself over the years. I find that the more generous I am materially, the more generous my disposition toward others has become. I am more generous in being forgiving, in being patient with others, and in being able to accept disappointments and counsel." Many have learned that generosity is spiritually enriching.—Ps. 112:5; Prov. 22:9.

¹¹ Using material assets to advance Kingdom interests shows "practical wisdom" in another way. It allows us to take advantage of our circumstances to help others. Those who have this world's means but cannot share in the full-time ministry or move abroad have the satisfaction of knowing that their donated funds support the ministry of others. (Prov. 19:17) Voluntary contributions help to supply literature and support the preaching work in territories where poverty abounds but where there is great spiritual growth. For years, in such lands as Congo, Madagascar, and Rwanda,

11. (a) How does our freely giving show "practical wisdom"? (b) What equalizing of finances is taking place among God's people? (See opening picture.)



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brothers often had to choose between having food for their families and having copies of the Bible, which sometimes cost the equivalent of a weekly or a monthly wage. Now, by means of the contributions of many and “an equalizing” of finances, Jehovah’s organization has sponsored the translation and distribution of Bibles to each member of the family as well as to spiritually hungry Bible students. **(Read 2 Corinthians 8:13-15.)** Thus, Jehovah’s friendship is being freely extended to both the givers and the receivers.

MINIMAL INVOLVEMENT IN “THE COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES OF LIFE”

¹² Another way to gain friendship with Jehovah is by minimizing our involvement with the commercial world and using our circumstances to seek “true” riches. Abraham, a man of faith in ancient times, obediently left prosperous Ur in order to live in tents and pursue his friendship with Jehovah. (Heb. 11:8-10) He always looked to God as the Source of true wealth, never seeking material advantages that would indicate a lack of trust. (Gen. 14:22, 23) Jesus encouraged this sort of faith, telling a rich young man: “If you want to be perfect, go sell your belongings and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come be my follower.” (Matt. 19:21) That man lacked faith like that of Abraham, but others have shown implicit trust in God.

¹³ Timothy was a man of faith. After calling Timothy “a fine soldier of Christ

Jesus,” Paul told him: “No man serving as a soldier involves himself in the commercial businesses of life, in order to gain the approval of the one who enrolled him as a soldier.” (2 Tim. 2:3, 4) Jesus’ followers today, including an army of over one million full-time ministers, apply Paul’s counsel to the extent that their circumstances allow. Resisting the pressures of advertising and the world around them, they remember the principle: “The borrower is a slave to the lender.” (Prov. 22:7) Satan would like nothing better than to have us spend all our time and energy as slaves to his commercial world. Some decisions could keep us in financial bondage for years. Huge home mortgages, lingering student loans, expensive car payments, even extravagant weddings can result in great financial pressure. We demonstrate practical wisdom when we simplify our life and reduce debt and expenses, setting ourselves free to slave for God rather than for today’s commercial system.—1 Tim. 6:10.

¹⁴ Keeping our life simple involves setting priorities. One couple owned a thriving manufacturing business. However, their desire to reenter the full-time ministry compelled them to sell the business, their boat, and other material items. They then volunteered to help with the construction of world headquarters in Warwick, New York. A special blessing for them has been to serve at Bethel with their daughter and son-in-law and, for some weeks, with the husband’s parents, who also worked on the Warwick project. A pioneer sister in Colorado, U.S.A., found part-time employment at a

12. How did Abraham show that he trusted in God?

13. (a) What admonition did Paul give to Timothy? (b) How can we apply Paul’s counsel today?

14. What kind of determination is needed? Give examples.

bank. The staff was so pleased with her work that she was offered a full-time position at triple her salary. However, since the job would diminish her focus on the ministry, she turned down this lucrative offer. These are just a few examples of the countless sacrifices made by servants of Jehovah. Such determination to put Kingdom interests first shows that we value God's friendship and spiritual riches far more than what today's commercial world can offer.

WHEN MATERIAL RICHES FAIL

¹⁵ Material wealth is not necessarily an indication of God's blessing. Jehovah blesses those who are "rich in fine works." (**Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.**) For example, when Lucia* learned of the need for ministers in Albania, she moved there from Italy in 1993 with no means of support, trusting fully in Jehovah. She mastered the Albanian language and has helped over 60 individuals to the point of dedication. While the majority of God's people do not preach in such fruitful territories, *anything* we do to help others find and stay on the road to life is something that we and they will treasure forever.—Matt. 6:20.

¹⁶ Jesus said: "When such [unrighteous riches] fail," not 'if they fail.' (Luke 16:9) Bank and economic collapses that have occurred in these last days are insignificant when compared with what will happen on a world scale in the near

* The life story of Lucia Moussanett appears in the June 22, 2003, issue of *Awake!*, pp. 18-22.

15. What riches bring the greatest satisfaction?

16. (a) What lies ahead for today's commercial system? (b) How should what we know about the future affect our view of material wealth?

future. Satan's entire system—political, religious, and commercial—is destined to fail. The prophets Ezekiel and Zephaniah foretold that gold and silver, staples of the commercial world through the centuries, will become worthless. (Ezek. 7:19; Zeph. 1:18) How would we feel if we reached the end of our life in this world and realized that we had sacrificed true riches for a vast store of this world's "unrighteous riches"? We could feel like a man who has worked all his life for a pile of money, only to learn that it is counterfeit. (Prov. 18:11) Yes, such riches *will* ultimately fail, so do not lose the opportunity to use them to "make friends" in heaven. Whatever we do to advance the interests of Jehovah's Kingdom makes us spiritually rich.

¹⁷ When God's Kingdom does come, rent and mortgages will cease, food will be free and plentiful, health-care costs will disappear. Jehovah's earthly family will enjoy the best that the earth has to offer. Gold, silver, and gems will be for adornment, not for investment or hoarding. High-quality materials of wood, stone, and metal will be freely available to build beautiful homes. Friends will assist us for sheer satisfaction, not for money. A new system of sharing earth's bounties will be a way of life.

¹⁸ This is just part of the priceless inheritance for those who make friends in heaven. The rejoicing of Jehovah's earthly worshippers will know no bounds when they hear Jesus' words: "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world." —Matt. 25:34.

17, 18. What is in store for friends of God?



“Weep With Those Who Weep”

“Keep encouraging one another and building one another up.”

—1 THESS. 5:11.

SONGS: 90, 111

DO YOU RECALL?

How does Jehovah provide consolation?

Which scriptures can comfort the bereaved?

How can the congregation provide comfort to those who are mourning?

“FOR almost a year after the death of our son, we felt deep and excruciating pain,” said Susi. Another Christian said that when his wife died suddenly, he experienced “indescribable physical pain.” Sadly, countless others experience this kind of agony. Many in the Christian congregation may not have expected their loved ones to die this side of Armageddon. Whether you have personally lost a loved one in death or know someone who is bereaved, you may wonder, ‘How can grieving ones be helped to deal with their heartache?’

² Perhaps you have heard it said that time is a great healer. However, does it really follow that time by itself will heal a broken heart? One widow observed, “I have found it more accurate to say that it is what one does with one’s time that helps one to heal.” Yes, like a physical wound, the pain of an emotional wound may gradually ease over time if it is given tender care. What, specifically, can help bereaved individuals heal their painful emotional wounds?

1, 2. Why do we need to discuss how to provide consolation for the bereaved? (See opening picture.)

JEHOVAH—“THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT”

³ Without a doubt, the primary source of consolation is our compassionate heavenly Father, Jehovah. (**Read 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.**) Jehovah, the foremost example of empathy, assured his people: “I myself am the One comforting you.”—Isa. 51:12; Ps. 119:50, 52, 76.

⁴ Our Father of tender mercies has himself experienced the loss of loved ones, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and King David. (Num. 12:6-8; Matt. 22:31, 32; Acts 13:22) God’s Word assures us that Jehovah has eagerly anticipated—has had an earnest longing for—the time when he will bring them back to life. (Job 14:14, 15) They will be happy and in vibrant health. Consider, too, that God’s dearly beloved Son—“the one he was especially fond of”—died an agonizing death. (Prov. 8:22, 30) Words cannot express the pain Jehovah must have suffered.—John 5:20; 10:17.

⁵ We can have unwavering confidence that Jehovah will act in our behalf. We should therefore not hesitate to pour out our hearts to him in prayer concerning our personal grief. How comforting it is to know that Jehovah understands our pain and provides the comfort that we so sorely need! But how does he do so?

⁶ One way God helps us is by means of “the comfort of the holy spirit.” (Acts 9:31) God’s active force is a very powerful source of comfort. Jesus promised that the Father in heaven would eagerly “give holy spirit to those asking him.” (Luke 11:13) Susi, quoted earlier, says: “There were so many times when we just

dropped to our knees and implored Jehovah to comfort us. Every single time, the peace of God truly guarded our hearts and minds.”—**Read Philippians 4:6, 7.**

JESUS—A SYMPATHETIC HIGH PRIEST

⁷ Jehovah’s tender empathy was perfectly expressed in the words and actions of his compassionate Son, Jesus, when he was on earth. (John 5:19) Jesus was sent to provide comfort for “the broken-hearted” and “all who mourn.” (Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 4:17-21) Hence, he was characterized by deep compassion—a sympathetic awareness of people’s suffering and a heartfelt desire to alleviate their suffering.—Heb. 2:17.

⁸ In his younger years, Jesus no doubt had to deal with the deaths of family members and acquaintances. It seems likely that Joseph, his adoptive father, died when Jesus was still a relatively young man.* Imagine how the tender-hearted Jesus, perhaps just in his teens or early 20’s, had to deal with his own grief, as well as that of his mother, brothers, and sisters.

⁹ When Jesus embarked on his ministry, it was with a remarkable depth of insight and fellow feeling. Take, for example, the time when his dear friend Lazarus died. Even though Jesus

* The last mention of Joseph was when Jesus was 12 years old. When Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine, there was no mention of Joseph—then or on any subsequent occasion. When on the torture stake, Jesus entrusted Mary to the care of the apostle John, which Jesus would not likely have done had Joseph still been alive.—John 19:26, 27.

3, 4. Why can we be sure that Jehovah understands a grieving person’s need for comfort?

5, 6. How can we be consoled by Jehovah?

7, 8. Why can we be confident that Jesus will provide comfort?

9. How did Jesus show empathy when Lazarus died?

knew that he was going to resurrect Lazarus, he felt the painful sting of sorrow that overwhelmed Mary and Martha. He was so moved that a surge of strong empathetic feeling cut him to the heart and brought him to tears.—John 11:33-36.

¹⁰ How can Jesus' expressions of sympathy and consolation help us today? The Scriptures reassure us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8) Since "the Chief Agent of life" personally understands what it is like to feel grief, "he is able to come to the aid of those who are being put to the test." (Acts 3:15; Heb. 2:10, 18) Therefore, we can be confident that Christ continues to be moved by the anguish of others, to understand their grief, and to provide them consolation "at the right time."—**Read Hebrews 4:15, 16.**

"COMFORT FROM THE SCRIPTURES"

¹¹ The account about Jesus' intense grief at the time of Lazarus' death is just one of countless consoling scriptures found in God's comforting Word. And no wonder, "for all the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction, so that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." (Rom. 15:4) If you are grieving, you too can find soothing comfort from such scriptures as the following:

- *"Jehovah is close to the brokenhearted; he saves those who are crushed in spirit."*—Ps. 34:18, 19.

10. Why can we be confident of Jesus' sympathy today?

11. Which scriptures do you find particularly comforting?

- *"When anxieties overwhelmed me, you [Jehovah] comforted and soothed me."*—Ps. 94:19.
- *"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."*—2 Thess. 2:16, 17.*

THE CONGREGATION —A SOURCE OF GREAT COMFORT

¹² Another source of comfort to grieving ones is the Christian congregation. (**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11.**) How can you strengthen and console those who have "a crushed spirit"? (Prov. 17:22) Bear in mind that there is "a time to be silent and a time to speak." (Eccl. 3:7) A widow named Dalene explains: "Bereaved ones need to express their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the most important thing you can do for a bereaved person is to listen—without interrupting." Junia, whose brother took his own life, adds: "Even though you may not be able to grasp their grief completely, what counts is that you *want* to understand how they feel."

¹³ Remember, too, that not everyone experiences and expresses grief in the same way. At times, only a person's own heart grasps the full depth of the emotional pain, and it may be difficult for him to voice his innermost feelings. God's Word states: "The heart knows

* Other scriptures that many have found comforting are Psalm 20:1, 2; 31:7; 38:8, 9, 15; 55:22; 121:1, 2; Isaiah 57:15; 66:13; Philippians 4:13; and 1 Peter 5:7.

12. What is one important way in which we can be a source of comfort to others?

13. What do we need to remember about grief?

its own bitterness, and no outsider can share in its joy.” (Prov. 14:10) Even when someone does express how he feels, it is not always easy for others to understand what he is trying to say.

¹⁴ Understandably, then, it can be difficult to know what to say to someone who is overwhelmed by grief. Nevertheless, the Bible states that “the tongue of the wise is a healing.” (Prov. 12:18) Many have found comforting thoughts to share from the brochure *When Someone You Love Dies*.^{*} Often, though, the most helpful thing you can do is to “weep with those who weep.” (Rom. 12:15) “Tears have become the language of my heart,” admits Gaby, whose husband died. “That is why I get some comfort when friends cry with me. At that moment, I don’t feel quite so alone in my grief.”

¹⁵ If you find it difficult to say something in person, it may be easier to provide consolation by means of a sympathy card, an e-mail, a text message, or a letter. You could simply quote a comforting scripture, recall some memorable characteristic or quality of the deceased, or share a happy memory that you cherish. “Receiving a short encouraging message or an invitation to spend time with a fellow Christian helps me more than I can say,” says Junia. “Those expressions make me feel loved and cared for.”

^{*} See also the article “Comfort the Bereaved, as Jesus Did” in the November 1, 2010, issue of *The Watchtower*.

14. How can we provide words of comfort to the bereaved?

15. How might we provide consolation if we find it difficult to do so in person? (See also the box “Soothing Words of Consolation.”)



Soothing Words of Consolation

Here is what some have written to comfort bereaved friends:

- “We don’t know what to say except that we love you. We can’t understand exactly how you feel, but Jehovah does and will keep raising you up. We hope that our prayers will help a little.”
- “May Jehovah sustain you at this time of such great loss.”
- “May you find comfort in knowing that your dear one is safe in the memory of God, who will remember every detail about him and bring him back again.”
- “Your loved one will never have to face the last enemy, death, ever again. In the meantime, his acts of faith live on until he stands up alive and whole in the Paradise.”
- “While words fail to capture the pain of losing a loved one, we look forward to the time when words will fail to capture the joy of having our heavenly Father return your dear one to you.”

¹⁶ Do not underestimate the value of your prayers with and for a bereaved fellow Christian. Even though it may be difficult to express your prayerful thoughts in such an emotional situation, your heartfelt supplication in his behalf, even through tears and an unsteady voice, can be a powerful antidote to grief. “Sometimes when sisters have come to comfort me,” recalls Dalene, “I have asked them if they are willing to say a prayer. They start praying, often battling to speak at first, but every time, within a few sentences, their voice gets stronger and they say the most heartfelt prayer. Their strong faith, their love, and their concern have been very faith-strengthening.”

KEEP PROVIDING COMFORT

¹⁷ The grieving process can vary greatly from person to person. Therefore, make yourself available, not just for the first few days when many friends and relatives are present, but in subsequent months when others have returned to their normal routine. “A true friend shows love at all times, and is a brother who is born for times of distress.” (Prov. 17:17) Fellow Christians can be a source of profound comfort for someone for as long as it takes him or her to deal with grief.—**Read 1 Thessalonians 3:7.**

¹⁸ Remember that bereaved ones may experience pangs of grief triggered by anniversaries, certain music, photographs, activities, or even a specific smell, sound, or season of the year.

16. What is a particularly effective way to provide consolation?

17-19. Why is there an ongoing need to give comfort?

Many things a bereaved marriage mate does alone for the first time—such as attending an assembly or the Memorial—can be particularly painful. “I expected my first wedding anniversary to be very traumatic,” relates one brother, “and it was not easy. But a few brothers and sisters planned a small gathering of my closest friends so that I wouldn’t be on my own.”

¹⁹ Bear in mind, though, that bereaved ones need encouragement not only on special occasions. “Often the help and companionship offered when there is no special anniversary can be very beneficial,” explains Junia. “Those spontaneous moments are so valuable and bring much comfort.” True, we cannot eliminate all the grief or completely fill the void caused by the death of a loved one, but we can bring a measure of comfort and consolation by taking practical action to assist the bereaved. (1 John 3:18) Gaby recalls: “I am truly grateful to Jehovah for the loving elders who walked me through every difficult step of the way. They have truly made me feel Jehovah’s loving arms around me.”

²⁰ How comforting it is to know that Jehovah, the God of all comfort, will eliminate all grief and provide permanent consolation when “all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Christ’s] voice and come out”! (John 5:28, 29) God promises that “he will do away with death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will wipe away the tears from all faces.” (Isa. 25:8, ftn.) Then, instead of having to “weep with those who weep,” all earth’s inhabitants will “rejoice with those who rejoice.”—Rom. 12:15.

20. Why are Jehovah’s promises a source of great comfort?



“Praise Jah!”—Why?

“Praise Jah! . . . How pleasant and fitting it is to praise him!”—PS. 147:1.

WHEN someone has done well at an assigned task or has displayed a remarkable Christian quality, he deserves praise. If that is true of humans, how much more do we have reason to praise Jehovah God! We can praise him because of his immense power, as seen in the wonders of his creation, or because of his warm dealings with humankind, as evidenced by his provision of the ransom sacrifice of his own Son.

² The writer of the 147th Psalm was moved to praise Jehovah. He also encouraged others to join him in giving God praise.—**Read Psalm 147:1, 7, 12.**

³ We do not know who wrote this psalm, but the psalmist apparently lived about the time when Jehovah restored the Israelites to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile. (Ps. 147:2) The restoration of God’s people to their place of true worship would certainly have moved the psalmist to praise Jehovah. Still, he stated additional reasons to do so. What were they? What reasons do you have to cry out “Hallelujah!” in your own life?—Ps. 147:1, ftn.

1-3. (a) Apparently, when was Psalm 147 written? (b) What can we learn from studying Psalm 147?

SONGS: 59, 3

HOW DOES PSALM 147 HELP YOU TO . . .

appreciate Jehovah’s
personal interest in you?

have confidence that God
will rescue you?

see how Jehovah sustains
his people with his Word?

JEHOVAH HEALS THE BROKENHEARTED

⁴ Imagine how the exiled Israelites must have felt in Babylon. Their captors jeered: “Sing for us one of the songs of Zion.” By then Jerusalem, their greatest reason to rejoice in Jehovah, had been desolated. (Ps. 137: 1-3, 6) The Jews did not feel like singing. Their hearts were broken, and they needed comfort and consolation. However, true to God’s prophetic word, deliverance came through Cyrus, king of Persia. He conquered Babylon and proclaimed: “Jehovah . . . has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem . . . Whoever there is among you of all his people, may Jehovah his God be with him, and let him go up.” (2 Chron. 36:23) What a comforting effect this development must have had on the Israelites dwelling in Babylon!

⁵ Jehovah gave comfort not only to the nation of Israel as a whole but also to each individual. The same is true today. The psalmist wrote of God: “He heals the brokenhearted; he binds up their wounds.” (Ps. 147:3) Yes, Jehovah cares for those who are having problems—whether physical or emotional. Today, Jehovah is eager to comfort us and to soothe our emotional wounds. (Ps. 34: 18; Isa. 57:15) He gives us wisdom and strength so that we can cope with any troubles we may face.—Jas. 1:5.

⁶ The psalmist then turns his atten-

tion to the heavens above, telling us that Jehovah “counts the number of the stars” and “calls all of them by name.” (Ps. 147:4) Why the seeming change of subject and reference to heavenly bodies? Consider this: The psalmist could see the stars with his physical eyes, but he had no idea of how many there really are. Over the years, the number of stars that we can see has increased tremendously. Some think that there are billions of stars in our Milky Way galaxy alone. And there may be trillions of galaxies in the universe! To us, stars are indeed without number! But the Creator gives all of them a *name* or a designation. This means that each star is unique to Jehovah. (1 Cor. 15:41) What about his human creatures on earth? The God who knows where each star is at any given time also knows you as an individual—exactly where you are, precisely how you feel, and specifically what you need at any given moment!

⁷ Not only is Jehovah interested in you as a person but he also has the power and empathy needed to help you with life’s problems. **(Read Psalm 147:5.)** You may feel that your situation is too difficult and the load too heavy for you to carry. God understands your limitations, ‘remembering that you are dust.’ (Ps. 103:14) Being imperfect, we make the same mistakes again and again. Oh, how we regret that slip of the tongue, those fleshly tendencies that flare up every now and then, or those inclinations to envy what others have! Jehovah does not experience such short-

4. When King Cyrus liberated the exiled Israelites, how must they have felt, and why?

5. What does the psalmist observe about Jehovah’s healing power?

6. How can we benefit from the psalmist’s seeming change of subject at Psalm 147:4? (See opening picture.)

7, 8. (a) When Jehovah saves his people from their trials, what does he take into consideration? (b) Illustrate how compassionate Jehovah is in helping imperfect humans.

comings himself; yet, his understanding of us is immeasurable, unsearchable! —Isa. 40:28.

⁸ You may already have experienced how Jehovah’s mighty hand helped you to recover from some trial. (Isa. 41:10, 13) Take, for example, Kyoko, a pioneer sister who became very discouraged after moving to a new assignment. How did Jehovah show his understanding of her problems? In her new circumstances, Kyoko found herself surrounded by individuals who could understand her feelings. She felt that Jehovah was telling her: “I love you, not just because you are a pioneer, but because you are my daughter and dedicated to me. I want you to enjoy your life as one of my Witnesses!” In your case, how has the Almighty shown that “his understanding is beyond measure”?

JEHOVAH PROVIDES WHAT WE NEED

⁹ Sometimes your needs may be physical. For instance, you may worry that you will not have enough food to eat. However, it is Jehovah who created the natural cycle needed to grow food, even for young ravens that call out for it! **(Read Psalm 147:8, 9.)** If he continues to feed the ravens, you can trust that Jehovah will provide your material necessities too.—Ps. 37:25.

¹⁰ Most important, Jehovah provides spiritual sustenance, giving us “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.” (Phil. 4:6, 7) Consider, for example, Mutsuo and his wife, who experienced Jehovah’s sustaining power following the 2011 Japan tsunami. By

climbing to the roof of their house, they barely escaped the tsunami. However, that day they lost almost everything they owned. They spent the dark, cold night in a room on the second floor of their battered home. In the morning, they looked for some spiritual encouragement. The only book they could find was the *2006 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses*. Immediately, the heading “The Deadliest Tsunamis Ever Recorded” caught Mutsuo’s eye. It was about an earthquake in Sumatra that in 2004 triggered the most devastating tsunamis in recorded history. Mutsuo and his wife wept as they read through the experiences. They felt God’s warm, loving care in providing the right spiritual encouragement just when they needed it. Jehovah also lovingly provided for them materially. Through their spiritual brothers, they received relief supplies. But what strengthened them most were the visits made to the congregation by the representatives of God’s organization. Mutsuo says: “I felt that Jehovah was right next to each one of us and caring for us. What comfort!” God provides spiritual sustenance first, and then he satisfies our physical needs.

BENEFIT FROM GOD’S SAVING POWER

¹¹ Jehovah is always ready to step in and ‘raise up the meek.’ (Ps. 147:6a) But how can we benefit from his readiness to act in our behalf? We have to have a good relationship with him. To have that, we need to cultivate meekness. (Zeph. 2:3) Meek ones wait on God to correct any wrongs and to undo

9, 10. What comes first when Jehovah extends help to us? Illustrate.

11. What is required of those who hope to benefit from God’s saving power?

the injuries inflicted on them. Jehovah looks on such ones with his smile of approval.

¹² On the other hand, God “hurls the wicked to the ground.” (Ps. 147:6b) These are strong words! To benefit from Jehovah’s loyal love and to avoid his wrath, we have to hate what he hates. (Ps. 97:10) For instance, we are to hate sexual immorality. This means that we have to stay away from anything that could lead us into such wrongdoing, including pornography. (Ps. 119:37; Matt. 5:28) This may be a hard fight, but having Jehovah’s blessing is worth any effort we must put forth.

¹³ In fighting this battle, we need to rely on Jehovah, not on ourselves. Will he be pleased if we try to save ourselves with “the power of the horse,” that is, where humans turn for help? No! Neither are we to rely on “the strong legs of a man,” acting as if we or some other human could bring salvation. (Ps. 147:10) Rather, we must approach Jehovah, begging for his help. Unlike human counselors, he never gets tired of hearing our petitions, even when we ask for his help over and over. “Jehovah finds pleasure in those who fear him, in those waiting for his loyal love.” (Ps. 147:11) We can trust that in his loyal love, he will stick with us and help us to conquer our wrong desires.

¹⁴ Jehovah gives us a basis for being convinced that he will help his people when they are in need. In thinking about the restoration of Jerusa-

lem, the psalmist sang about Jehovah: “He makes the bars of your city gates strong; he blesses your sons within you. He brings peace to your territory.” (Ps. 147:13, 14) How reassuring it was for the psalmist to know that God would strengthen the city’s gates to provide protection for his worshippers!

¹⁵ You may face difficulties that cause you to become anxious. Jehovah can give you the wisdom to cope. The psalmist said of his God that “he sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.” Then, referring to Jehovah as ‘sending the snow, scattering the frost, and hurling down the hailstones,’ the psalmist asks: “Who can withstand his cold?” He adds that Jehovah “sends out his word, and they melt.” (Ps. 147:15-18) Our all-wise, all-powerful God, the one who controls the hail and the snow, can help you to surmount any obstacles that you encounter.

¹⁶ Today, Jehovah guides us with his Word, the Bible. And “his word runs swiftly” in that he readily gives us spiritual direction when we need it. Think about how you benefit from reading the Bible, examining the publications of “the faithful and discreet slave,” watching JW Broadcasting, visiting jw.org, talking with the elders, and associating with fellow Christians. (Matt. 24:45) Have you not seen that Jehovah is swift to provide you with his guidance?

¹⁷ Simone has experienced the power of God’s Word. She had very low self-worth, to the point of doubting that she

12, 13. (a) To benefit from God’s help, what should we avoid? (b) With whom does Jehovah find pleasure?

14. What conviction strengthened the psalmist?

15-17. (a) How might we at times feel about our trials, but how does Jehovah use his Word to help us? (b) Illustrate how ‘God’s word runs swiftly.’



How can God's Word help when we feel overwhelmed by trials?

(See paragraphs 15-17)

was the kind of person God would approve of. However, during times of discouragement, she persevered in prayer, turning to Jehovah for his help. She also kept busy in her personal study of the Bible. She says, "I have never been in a situation where I have not felt Jehovah's strength and his guidance." This has helped her to try to remain as positive as possible.

¹⁸ The psalmist knew how favored

18. Why do you feel favored by God, and what reasons do you have to cry out "Praise Jah!"?

God's ancient people were. They were the only nation given God's "word" and "his regulations and judgments." **(Read Psalm 147:19, 20.)** Today, we are blessed to be the only ones on earth called by God's name. Knowing Jehovah and having his Word at work in our lives, we have come to enjoy a privileged relationship with him. Like the writer of Psalm 147, do you not have many good reasons to cry out "Praise Jah!" and to encourage others to do the same?



“May He . . . Give Success to All Your Plans”

“Find exquisite delight in Jehovah, and he will grant you the desires of your heart.”—PS. 37:4.

SONGS: 135, 81

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What plans can lead to a happy future for you?

What does sharing in full-time service teach a young person?

What could a life in the pioneer service lead to?

YOU young ones will probably agree that before starting a journey, it is wise to plan where you will go. Life is like a journey, and the time to plan where you want to go is when you are young. Of course, making plans can be challenging. A girl named Heather says: “It’s scary. You have to decide what to do with the rest of your life.” But take courage. Jehovah says to his people: “Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you.”—Isa. 41:10.

² Jehovah urges you to plan wisely for your future. (Eccl. 12:1; Matt. 6:20) He wants you to be happy. The delightful sights, sounds, and tastes of creation tell you that. Consider, too, how he cares for us and teaches us the best way of life. To those who reject his advice, Jehovah says: “You chose what displeased me. . . . Look! My servants will rejoice, but you will suffer shame. Look! My servants will shout joyfully because of the good condition of the heart.” (Isa. 65:12-14)

1. What must a young person decide about the future, but why is there no need to be overly anxious? (See opening picture.)
2. How do you know that Jehovah wants you to plan for a happy future?

Jehovah is glorified when his people make wise choices in life.—Prov. 27:11.

PLANS THAT WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY

³ What plans does Jehovah recommend for you? He created humans to find happiness by knowing him and by serving him faithfully. (Ps. 128:1; Matt. 5:3) This is in sharp contrast with the animals he created, which are content merely to eat, drink, and produce offspring. God wants you to find happiness by planning for things other than those that satisfy animals. Your Creator is “the God of love,” “the happy God,” who made humans “in his image.” (2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Tim. 1:11; Gen. 1:27) You will be happy when you imitate our loving God. Have you ever experienced the truth of the scripture that says: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving”? (Acts 20:35) That is a basic truth about human life. Therefore, Jehovah desires that your plans focus on demonstrating love for others and for God.—**Read Matthew 22:36-39.**

⁴ Jesus Christ set the perfect example for you young ones. As a child, he no doubt played and had fun. God’s Word says that there is “a time to laugh . . . and a time to dance.” (Eccl. 3:4) Jesus also drew close to Jehovah by studying the Scriptures. When he was 12 years old, the teachers at the temple were amazed at “his understanding and his answers” regarding spiritual matters.—Luke 2:42, 46, 47.

⁵ Jesus grew up to be a happy adult. What made him happy? He knew that, among other things, God wanted him “to declare good news to the poor . . .

and a recovery of sight to the blind.” (Luke 4:18) Doing what God asked him to do made Jesus happy. Psalm 40:8 expresses his feelings: “To do your will, O my God, is my delight.” Jesus enjoyed teaching people about his heavenly Father. **(Read Luke 10:21.)** Once, after teaching a woman about true worship, Jesus said to his disciples: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:31-34) Showing love for God and for others made Jesus happy. It can make you happy too.

⁶ Many Christians experienced happiness in their youth by serving as pioneers. Why not discuss your plans with some of them? “Plans fail when there is no consultation, but there is accomplishment through many advisers.” (Prov. 15:22) Such spiritual people may tell you that the full-time ministry provides an education that benefits you throughout life. After having been instructed by his Father in heaven, Jesus continued to learn during his earthly ministry. For example, he learned the joy of reaching hearts with the good news and also the joy of keeping integrity under test. **(Read Isaiah 50:4; Heb. 5:8; 12:2)** Let us consider some aspects of full-time service that could make you very happy.

WHY DISCIPLE-MAKERS ARE SUCCESSFUL

⁷ Jesus said: “Go . . . make disciples of people . . . teaching them.” (Matt. 28:19, 20) If you plan to be a disciple-maker, you will be choosing a most satisfying

6. Why is it worth discussing your plans for the future with experienced Christians?

7. Why do many young people enjoy making disciples?

3. What does Jehovah recommend for you?

4, 5. What made Jesus happy?

career, one that glorifies God. As with any career, you need time to become skilled. Recently, a brother named Timothy who started pioneering as a teenager said: “I like serving Jehovah full-time because it’s the way I express my love for him. At first, I couldn’t start any Bible studies, but later I moved to another territory, and within a month I started several studies. One student began coming to the Kingdom Hall. After I attended the two-month Bible School for Single Brothers,* I received a new assignment where I have started four studies. I love teaching people, as I can see that holy spirit is changing them.”—1 Thess. 2:19.

⁸ Some young Christians have learned another language. For example, Jacob, from North America, writes: “When I was seven, many of my classmates were Vietnamese. I wanted to tell them about Jehovah, so after a while I made plans to learn their language. For the most part, I learned by comparing the English and Vietnamese editions of *The Watchtower*. I also made friends in a nearby Vietnamese-language congregation. When I was 18, I started pioneering. Later, I attended the Bible School for Single Brothers. This helped me with my present pioneer assignment, where I am the only elder in a Vietnamese-language group. Many Vietnamese people are amazed that I have learned their language. They invite me in, and often I can study the Bible with them. Some have progressed to baptism.”—Compare Acts 2:7, 8.

* Replaced by the School for Kingdom Evangelizers.

8. How have some young Christians shared more fully in making disciples?

⁹ Disciple-making is an educational experience that teaches you good work habits, communication skills, confidence, and tact. (Prov. 21:5; 2 Tim. 2:24, ftn.) But making disciples is especially joyful because it helps you to become more familiar with the Scriptural basis for your faith. You also learn how to work closely with Jehovah.—1 Cor. 3:9.

¹⁰ You can enjoy making disciples even if few people in your territory respond to the good news. Making disciples is teamwork. The whole congregation searches for sincere ones. Although only one brother or sister may find the person who eventually becomes a disciple, all shared in the search and all can share in the joy. For example, Brandon spent nine years pioneering in unresponsive territory. He says: “I like preaching the good news because it is what Jehovah asks us to do. I started pioneering soon after finishing school. I enjoy encouraging the young brothers in our congregation and seeing their spiritual progress. After I attended the Bible School for Single Brothers, I received a new pioneer assignment. It’s true that I have never found anyone in the territory who progressed to baptism, but others have. I’m glad I planned to share fully in the disciple-making work.”—Eccl. 11:6.

WHERE YOUR PLANS MAY LEAD YOU

¹¹ There are many opportunities to serve Jehovah. For example, many

9. How does the disciple-making work provide a fine education?

10. How can you share in the joy of making disciples even in a challenging territory?

11. What form of sacred service have many young people enjoyed?

named Dustin reports: “I made full-time service my goal when I was nine years old, and I started pioneering when I finished school. After a year and a half, I was invited to Bethel, where I learned to operate printing presses and later to do computer programming. At Bethel, I enjoy hearing firsthand about the progress of the disciple-making activity worldwide. I love serving here because what we do helps people to draw close to Jehovah.”

WHAT PLANS WILL YOU MAKE FOR YOUR FUTURE?

¹⁴ How can you plan to be a full-time Christian minister? More than anything, spiritual qualities will help you to be successful in serving Jehovah fully. So be diligent in your study of God’s Word, meditate deeply on its meaning, and look for ways to express your faith at congregation meetings. During your school years, you can acquire experience and skill as a preacher of the good news. Learn to be interested in people by tactfully asking their opinion and listening to their response. Also, you can offer to do things in the congregation, such as helping to clean and maintain the Kingdom Hall. Jehovah is pleased to use those who have a humble, willing spirit. **(Read Psalm 110:3; Acts 6:1-3)** The apostle Paul invited Timothy into missionary service because “he was well-reported-on by the brothers.”—Acts 16:1-5.

¹⁵ Full-time ministers generally need to earn a living. (Acts 18:2, 3) Perhaps a

14. How can you make plans to enter the full-time ministry?

15. How can you prepare to earn a living?

short school course will qualify you for part-time work that is in demand locally. As you make plans, consult your circuit overseer and the pioneers in your circuit. Ask them what work is practical for pioneers. And, as the Bible says, “commit to Jehovah whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”—Prov. 16:3; 20:18.

¹⁶ You can be sure that Jehovah wants you to “get a firm hold” on a happy future. **(Read 1 Timothy 6:18, 19.)** Full-time service brings you into contact with fellow full-time servants and helps you to mature as a Christian. Many have found that serving Jehovah fully during youth also helped them to have a more successful marriage. Often, those who pioneered before marriage have been able to continue in that service together as a married couple.—Rom. 16:3, 4.

¹⁷ Planning involves your heart. Psalm 20:4 says of Jehovah: “May he grant you the desires of your heart and give success to all your plans.” So think about what you want to do with your life. Consider what Jehovah is doing in our time and how you can have a share in his service. Then plan to do what is pleasing to him.

¹⁸ Serving Jehovah fully will bring you deep satisfaction because it is the way of life that honors God. Yes, “find exquisite delight in Jehovah, and he will grant you the desires of your heart.”—Ps. 37:4.

16. How can serving Jehovah fully in your youth prepare you for other responsibilities in the future?

17, 18. How does making plans involve your heart?



Winning the Battle for Your Mind

YOU are under attack! And your chief enemy, Satan, is using a very dangerous weapon against you. What is it? Propaganda! A weapon specially designed to attack, not your body, but *your mind*.

The apostle Paul was alert to the danger that satanic propaganda posed, but not all his fellow Christians were. Some in Corinth, for example, had apparently become overconfident—thinking that they were so strong in the truth that they could never fall. (1 Cor. 10:12) That is why Paul gave this warning: “I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, *your minds* might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ.”—2 Cor. 11:3.

Paul’s deep concern shows that there is no room for complacency. If you are going to win the battle for your mind, you must recognize the danger that propaganda poses and protect yourself from it.

PROPAGANDA—HOW DANGEROUS IS IT?

What is propaganda? In this context, it is the use of biased or misleading information to manipulate the way people think and act. Some equate propaganda with “lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control, [and] psychological warfare” and associate it with “unethical, harmful, and unfair tactics.”—*Propaganda and Persuasion*.

How dangerous is propaganda? It is insidious—like an invisible, odorless, poisonous gas—and it seeps into our consciousness. Because we may not see propaganda for what it is, behavior specialist Vance Packard observed: “Many of us are being influenced and manipulated—far more than we realize.” Under its influence, says one

scholar, men and women have been “quite easily led into the most preposterously dangerous behaviour”—such as ‘genocide, war, racist hysteria, religious intolerance and many other forms of irrational behaviour.’ —*Easily Led—A History of Propaganda*.

Now if *mere men* can fool us with their propaganda, what might *Satan* be able to do? He has studied human behavior since man was created. “The whole world” now lies in his power. He can use any part of it to disseminate his lies. (1 John 5:19; John 8:44) So effective has Satan been in ‘blinding people’s minds’ that he now ‘misleads the entire inhabited earth.’ (2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9) How can you resist his propaganda?

BUILD UP YOUR DEFENSES

Jesus gave this simple rule for combating propaganda: “Know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31, 32) But since truth is often the first casualty of war, you—like any other soldier in the heat of battle—need a source of trustworthy, reliable information to prevent the enemy

from playing tricks with your mind. Jehovah has provided this. In the pages of the Bible, you can find all you need to combat Satan’s propaganda.—2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

Of course, the great propagandist, Satan, knows this. So he uses his system of things to discourage Bible reading and study. Do not fall for his devious schemes! (Eph. 6:11, fn.) Become “thoroughly able to comprehend” the full scope of the truth. (Eph. 3:18) That will take real effort on your part. But remember this basic fact expressed by author Noam Chomsky: “Nobody is going to pour truth into your brain. It’s something you have to find out for yourself.” So “find out for yourself” by being diligent in “carefully examining the Scriptures daily.” —Acts 17:11.

Keep in mind that Satan does not want you to think clearly or reason things out well. Why? Because propaganda “is likely to be most effective,” says one source, “if people . . . are discouraged from thinking critically.” (*Media and Society in the Twentieth Century*) So never be content passively or blindly to accept what you hear. (Prov. 14:



15) Use your God-given thinking abilities and power of reason to make the truth your own.—Prov. 2:10-15; Rom. 12:1, 2.

BEWARE OF ATTEMPTS TO DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Military strategists may use propaganda to undermine morale and weaken the fighting spirit. They may induce enemy soldiers to fight among themselves or fool them into isolating themselves from the main fighting force. A German general, it has been said, admitted that one reason for defeat in World War I was that the people “were hypnotized by the enemy propaganda as a rabbit is by a snake.” Satan uses similar tricks in his attempts to divide and conquer, trying, for example, to stir up contentions among Christian brothers and sisters or to induce them to isolate themselves from Jehovah’s organization because of some perceived injustice or grievance.

Do not be deceived! Let God’s Word guide you. For example, in the matter of maintaining unity with your brothers and

sisters, the Bible encourages you to continue “forgiving one another freely” and to be quick to resolve matters of dispute. (Col. 3: 13, 14; Matt. 5:23, 24) It strongly warns us against isolating ourselves from the congregation. (Prov. 18:1) Test your defenses against satanic propaganda. Ask yourself: ‘What governed my thinking the last time I faced such a situation? Was it the world’s spirit or God’s spirit?’—Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 2:2, 3.

DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CONFIDENCE TO BE UNDERMINED

A soldier whose loyalty to his leader is weakened will not fight well. So propagandists attempt to break bonds of confidence and trust between a soldier and his commander. They may use such propaganda as: “You cannot trust your leaders!” and “Do not let them lead you into disaster!” To add weight to these attacks, they may cleverly exploit any mistakes those leaders might make. Satan does this. He never gives up trying to undermine your confidence in the leadership that Jehovah has provided.

To win the battle for your mind,
you must recognize the danger
that propaganda poses and
protect yourself from it



Your defense? Be determined to stick to Jehovah's organization and loyally support the leadership he provides—no matter what imperfections may surface. (1 Thess. 5:12, 13) Do not be “quickly shaken from your reason” when faced with what appear to be damaging attacks by apostates or other such deceivers of the mind—however plausible their charges may seem. (2 Thess. 2:2; Titus 1:10) Follow the advice given to the young man Timothy. Stick to the truth you learned, and remember where you learned it. (2 Tim. 3:14, 15) Surely there is ample evidence to show that you can trust the channel that Jehovah has used for nearly a hundred years now to lead us in the way of the truth.—Matt. 24:45-47; Heb. 13:7, 17.

DO NOT LET TERROR TACTICS WEAKEN YOU

Keep in mind, though, that Satan's propaganda is not always subtle. At times, he uses terror tactics—“one of the oldest of all forms of propaganda.” (*Easily Led—A History of Propaganda*) The Assyrians, for example, dominated their enemies with “a policy of terror coupled with one of propaganda,” wrote British Professor Philip M. Taylor. Satan will use fear of man, fear of persecution, fear of death, and any other kind of negative fear to try to dominate you and make you shrink back from serving Jehovah.—Isa. 8:12; Jer. 42:11; Heb. 2:15.

Do not let Satan use *fear itself* to weaken your morale or break your integrity. Jesus said: “Do not fear those who kill the body and after this are not able to do anything more.” (Luke 12:4) Have complete confidence in Jehovah's promise to watch over you, to give you “the power beyond what is normal,” and to help you withstand any attempts to frighten you into submission.—2 Cor. 4:7-9; 1 Pet. 3:14.

You may, of course, encounter frightening, morale-weakening events. But keep in mind Jehovah's words of encouragement to Joshua: “Be courageous and strong. Do not be struck with terror or fear, for Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.” (Josh. 1:9) If anxiety strikes, go immediately to Jehovah in prayer with all your concerns. You can be sure that “the peace of God . . . will guard your hearts and your mental powers” so that you will have the strength to resist all of Satan's propaganda.—Phil. 4:6, 7, 13.

Do you remember the propaganda used by the Assyrian envoy, the Rabshakeh, against God's people? He said, in effect, ‘Nothing can protect you from Assyria. Even your God, Jehovah, can do nothing for you.’ He boldly added: ‘Jehovah himself told us to destroy this land.’ What did Jehovah say in return? “Do not be afraid because of the words that you heard, . . . with which the attendants of the king of Assyria blasphemed me.” (2 Ki. 18:22-25; 19:6) He then sent an angel who destroyed 185,000 Assyrians in one night!—2 Ki. 19:35.

BE WISE—ALWAYS LISTEN TO JEHOVAH

Have you ever watched a film in which, from your vantage point in the audience, you can clearly see that someone is being deceived and manipulated? Did you find yourself thinking: ‘Do not believe it! They are lying to you!’ Imagine, then, the angels shouting the same message to you: “Do not be fooled by Satan's lies!”

Shut your ears, then, to Satan's propaganda. (Prov. 26:24, 25) Listen to Jehovah and trust in him in all that you do. (Prov. 3:5-7) Respond to his loving appeal: “Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice.” (Prov. 27:11) Then, you will win the battle for your mind!

Would it be fitting for a Christian to keep a firearm, such as a handgun or a rifle, for protection against other humans?

■ While Christians may take reasonable steps to ensure their personal security, they do so within the framework of Bible principles. These advise against the use of carnal weapons, such as handguns, rifles, or other firearms, for protection against other humans. Consider the following:

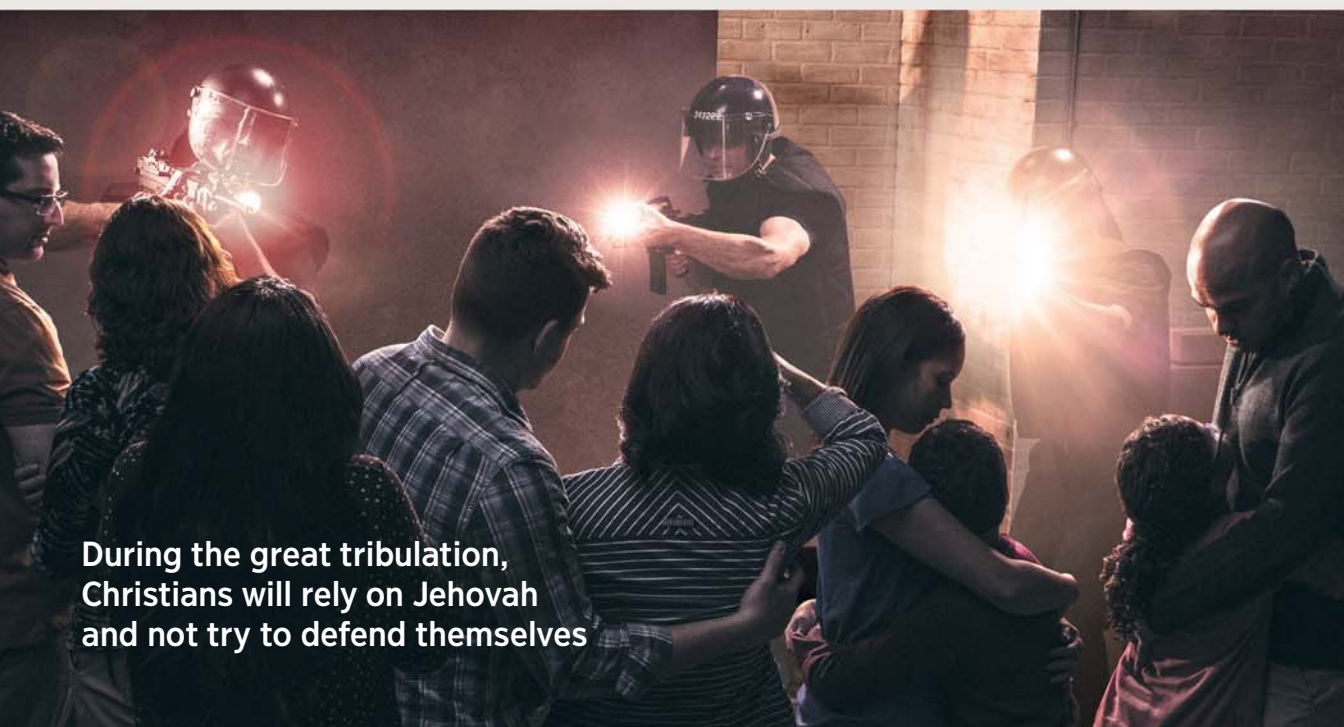
In Jehovah’s eyes, life—especially human life—is sacred. The psalmist David knew that Jehovah “is the source of life.” (Ps. 36:9) Hence, if a Christian chooses to take reasonable measures to defend himself or his property, he would do everything in his power to avoid taking a human life and becoming bloodguilty.—Deut. 22:8; Ps. 51:14.

Although using any number of objects could lead to incurring bloodguilt, guns make it easier to kill someone—accidental-

ly or deliberately.* Moreover, if an attacker—who may already be tense—sees that the other person has a firearm, the situation is very likely to escalate and a death might result.

When Jesus told his followers to equip themselves with swords on the final night of his life on earth, he did not have protection in mind. (Luke 22:36, 38) Rather, Jesus had them bring a sword for an object lesson to teach them *not* to resort to violence, even when confronted by an armed crowd.

* A Christian might decide to own a firearm (such as a rifle or a shotgun) for hunting animals for food or for protection against wild animals. When not in use, though, such weapons are best kept unloaded, perhaps even disassembled, and safely locked away. Where gun ownership is illegal, restricted, or regulated in some other way, Christians obey the law.—Rom. 13:1.



During the great tribulation, Christians will rely on Jehovah and not try to defend themselves

(Luke 22:52) After Peter wielded one of the swords against the high priest's slave, Jesus commanded Peter: "Return your sword to its place." Then Jesus stated a fundamental truth, a principle that guides his followers to this day: "All those who take up the sword will perish by the sword."—Matt. 26:51, 52.

In harmony with Micah 4:3, God's people "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears." This identifying trait of true Christians harmonizes with the apostle Paul's inspired exhortation: "Return evil for evil to no one. . . . If possible, as far as it depends on you, be peaceable with all men." (Rom. 12:17, 18) Despite the many troubles that Paul experienced, including "dangers from robbers," he lived by his words, never putting personal security above Scriptural principles. (2 Cor. 11:26) Instead, he trusted in God and in the wisdom found in His Word—wisdom that "is better than weapons of war."—Eccl. 9:18.

Christians consider life to be far more valuable than material things. "Life does not result from the things [a man] possesses." (Luke 12:15) Thus, if a mild tongue fails to stop an armed robber, wise Christians heed the principle embodied in Jesus' words: "Do not resist the one who is wicked." It may even require that we give up our inner and outer garments, so to speak. (Matt. 5:39, 40; Luke 6:29)* The best strategy, of course, is prevention. If we shun "the showy display of [our] means of life" and are known by our neighbors as peace-loving

Witnesses of Jehovah, we may avoid being targeted by violent criminals.—1 John 2:16; Prov. 18:10.

Christians respect others' consciences.

(Rom. 14:21) If it became known that a member of the congregation kept a gun for protection against humans, some fellow believers might be shocked, even stumbled. Love moves us to put others' interests ahead of our own, even when that means putting aside what we may feel is a legal right.—1 Cor. 10:32, 33; 13:4, 5.

Christians strive to be exemplary. (2 Cor. 4:2; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3) After receiving Scriptural counsel, a Christian who continues to keep a gun for protection against other humans could not be considered exemplary. He would therefore not qualify for responsibilities or special privileges in the congregation. The same applies to a Christian who continues to carry a firearm as part of his secular work. How much better to seek other employment!*

How a Christian chooses to protect himself, his family, or his possessions is, of course, largely a personal matter, as is his choice of employment. That said, Bible principles reflect God's wisdom and his love for us. Out of regard for those principles, spiritually mature Christians choose *not to keep a firearm for protection against other humans*. They know that true and lasting security comes to those who demonstrate trust in God by living in harmony with Bible principles.—Ps. 97:10; Prov. 1:33; 2:6, 7.

* Regarding the matter of defending oneself against rape, see the article "How to Prevent Rape" in the March 8, 1993, issue of *Awake!*

* Further details on the question of accepting employment that involves being armed are found in *The Watchtower* of November 1, 2005, p. 31; and July 15, 1983, pp. 25-26.

