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**SONG 56**

Make the Truth Your Own

**PREVIEW**

It warms the hearts of all servants of Jehovah when young ones get baptized. Of course, after baptism, new disciples must continue to make spiritual progress. For the benefit of all in the congregation, this article will focus on ways that recently baptized young Christians can continue to grow toward Christian maturity.

## Young Ones—Continue to Make Progress After Baptism

*“Let us by love grow up in all things.”*—EPH. 4:15.

EVERY year, thousands of young Christians get baptized. Have you taken this step? If you have, your spiritual brothers and sisters are happy for you, and Jehovah rejoices too! (Prov. 27:11) Think for a moment about how much you have already accomplished. You have diligently studied the Bible, perhaps for a number of years. Your studies have convinced you that the Bible is the Word of God. More than that, though, you have come to know and love the Author of that sacred book. Your love for Jehovah has grown to the point that you are now one of his dedicated, baptized servants. How marvelous!

<sup>2</sup> No doubt your faith was tested in a number of ways as you were progressing toward baptism. But as you grow older, you will face new tests. Satan will try to weaken your love for Jehovah and to draw you away from serving Him. (Eph. 4:14) You must not allow that to happen. What can help you to remain loyal to Jehovah and fulfill your dedication vow? You must continue to make progress—to “press on” to Christian maturity. (Heb. 6:1) How, though, can you do that?

### HOW CAN YOU MAKE PROGRESS AS A CHRISTIAN?

<sup>3</sup> After baptism, all of us need to follow the advice the apostle Paul gave to fellow believers in Ephesus. He en-

1. What good things have many young ones already accomplished?
2. What will we discuss in this article?
3. What progress do all Christians need to make after baptism?

couraged them to become “full-grown” Christians. (Eph. 4:13) That is another way of saying, ‘Continue to make progress.’ We can understand what Paul meant when he compared spiritual growth to the physical growth of a child. A newborn infant is the delight and the pride of his parents. But he cannot remain an infant forever. In time, he will have to do away with “the traits of a child.” (1 Cor. 13:11) It is similar for Christians. After baptism, we must continue to make progress. Let us consider some suggestions that will help us to do that.

<sup>4</sup> ***Grow in your love for Jehovah.*** You already love Jehovah very much. But your love for him can grow deeper. How? The apostle Paul points to one way, as recorded at **Philippians 1:9. (Read.)** Paul prayed that the love of the Philippians “abound still more and more.” So we can grow in our love. We can do that by acquiring “accurate knowledge and full discernment.” The more we get to know Jehovah, the more we love him and appreciate his personality and way of doing things. We grow in our eagerness to please him, never wanting to do anything that would disappoint him. We work hard to discern what his will is and how we can cooperate with it.

<sup>5</sup> We can grow in our love for Jehovah by getting better acquainted with his Son, who perfectly reflects his Father’s personality. (Heb. 1:3) The best way to

get to know Jesus is to study the four Gospel accounts. If you have not yet developed the useful habit of reading the Bible every day, why not start now? As you read the accounts about Jesus, take special note of his qualities. He was approachable; he lovingly took small children into his arms. (Mark 10:13-16) He put his disciples at ease; they felt free to speak their mind when in his presence. (Matt. 16:22) In this regard, Jesus imitated his heavenly Father. Jehovah is also very approachable. We can turn to him in prayer. When we pray, we can pour out our heart to him. We are confident that he will not condemn us. He loves us; he cares for us.—1 Pet. 5:7.

<sup>6</sup> Jesus felt compassion for people. The apostle Matthew reports: “On seeing the crowds, he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matt. 9:36) And how does Jehovah feel? Jesus said: “It is not a desirable thing to my Father who is in heaven for even one of these little ones to perish.” (Matt. 18:14) How heartwarming that is! As we get to know Jesus better, our love for Jehovah grows.

<sup>7</sup> You can also learn to be more loving and make progress as a Christian by getting acquainted with mature brothers and sisters in your congregation. Notice how joyful they are. They have no regrets about their decision to serve Jehovah. Ask them to tell you about some of the experiences they have had in Jehovah’s service. When you have an

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4. What quality can help you to make spiritual progress? Explain. (Philippians 1:9)

5-6. How can we grow in our love for Jehovah? Explain.

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7. How can associating with mature Christians help you?



How can you be prepared when confronted with the evolution theory at school?

(See paragraphs 8-9)



important decision to make, ask them for advice. After all, “there is success through many advisers.”—Prov. 11:14.

<sup>8</sup> **Overcome your doubts.** As mentioned in paragraph 2, Satan will try to prevent you from making further spiritual progress. One way he may do that is by raising doubts in your mind about some of the Bible’s teachings. For example, sooner or later you will come across the God-dishonoring theory of evolution. You may have given little or no thought to the subject when you were younger, but now that you are older, perhaps you are confronted with it directly in school. What your teachers say in support of evolution may seem logical and convincing. However, they may have never seriously considered the evidence of the existence of a Creator. Remember the principle found at Proverbs 18:17: “The first to state his case seems right, until the other party comes and cross-examines him.”

8. What can you do if you ever have doubts about what the Bible says?

Instead of blindly accepting ideas that you hear at school as fact, carefully consider the truths found in God’s Word, the Bible. Do research in our publications. Talk to brothers and sisters who believed in evolution in the past. Ask them what convinced them that there is a Creator who loves us. Such upbuilding discussions can help you to focus on the facts.

<sup>9</sup> A sister named Melissa greatly benefited from the research she did on the subject of creation.\* She says: “In school, evolution is presented in a way that seems so convincing. At first, I was afraid to confront my doubts. I feared that my beliefs would not hold up under examination. But I reasoned that Jehovah does not want us to serve him blindly. So I faced my doubts. I read the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* and the brochures *Was Life Created?* and *The Origin of Life—Five Questions Worth*

\* Some names have been changed.

9. What do you learn from the experience of Melissa?

*Asking.* This was exactly what I needed. I wish that I had done it sooner.”

<sup>10</sup> **Reject wrong conduct.** During adolescence, sexual feelings can become intense, and you may face strong pressure to commit sexual immorality. Satan wants you to give in to your desires. What can help you remain morally clean? (**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4.**) In your personal prayers, share your feelings with Jehovah. Tell him how you really feel, and ask him to strengthen you. (Matt. 6:13) Remember that Jehovah wants to help you, not to condemn you. (Ps. 103:13, 14) You can also turn to God’s Word for help. Melissa, quoted earlier, struggled to resist unclean thoughts. She says: “Reading the Bible every day kept me from giving up. It reminded me that I belong to Jehovah and that I want him in my life.”—Ps. 119:9.

<sup>11</sup> Do not try to handle your problems on your own. Talk with your parents about your struggle. It is not easy to talk about such personal matters, of course, but it is important to do so. Melissa says: “I prayed for courage and then talked with my dad about my problem. After that, I felt a great sense of relief. I knew that Jehovah was proud of me.”

<sup>12</sup> **Be guided by Bible principles.** You will gradually gain more freedom to make your own decisions. But your experience in life is still limited. How can you avoid making a mistake that would affect your friendship with Jehovah? (Prov. 22:3) A sister named Kari

explains what helped her to make better decisions. She realized that mature Christians do not need a rule to govern every situation. She says: “I needed to understand Bible principles rather than just rules.” When reading the Bible, ask yourself: ‘What does this passage tell me about Jehovah’s thinking? Does it contain principles that I can use to guide my conduct? If so, how will I benefit when I apply them?’ (Ps. 19:7; Isa. 48:17, 18) By reading the Bible and meditating on its principles, you will find it easier to make decisions that please Jehovah. As you continue to make progress, you will notice that you do not need a rule for every situation because you will understand Jehovah’s thinking on matters.

<sup>13</sup> **Choose friends who love Jehovah.** As mentioned earlier, your choice of friends will greatly affect your growth as a Christian. (**Read Proverbs 13:20.**) A sister named Sara was losing her joy. Then something happened that helped her to change her outlook. Sara relates: “Good friends came into my life at just the right time. A young sister and I got together each week to study *The Watchtower*. Another friend helped me to start commenting at meetings. Because of the influence of my friends, I began to take personal study and prayer more seriously. I started to develop a stronger relationship with Jehovah, and I began to feel joy again.”

<sup>14</sup> How can you make friends with people who will be a good influence on you?

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10-11. What can help you remain morally clean? (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4)

12. How can you make good decisions?

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13. What effect can good friends have on you? (Proverbs 13:20)

14. How did Julien make good friends?





What kind of friends did a young sister choose, and what goal did she set for herself?

(See paragraphs 13, 17)



Julien, who now serves as an elder, says: “When I was younger, I made good friends while sharing in the ministry. These friends were zealous, and they helped me see how enjoyable the ministry can be. I began to have the full-time ministry as my goal. I also realized that I had been missing out on good company and interesting friendships by limiting my friends to those my own age. Later, I also made good friends at Bethel. Their example helped me improve my choice of entertainment, and this brought me closer to Jehovah.”

<sup>15</sup> What if you realize that someone in the congregation is not good association for you? Paul knew that some individuals in the first-century Christian congregation did not have a spiritual outlook, so he warned Timothy to keep clear of them. **(Read 2 Timothy 2:20-22.)** Our friendship with Jehovah is precious. We should not allow anyone to weaken the bond that we have worked so

hard to forge with our heavenly Father.  
—Ps. 26:4.

#### HOW CAN SETTING GOALS HELP YOU TO MAKE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS?

<sup>16</sup> **Set worthwhile goals.** Choose goals that will strengthen and refine you. (Eph. 3:16) For example, you may decide to improve your routine of personal study and Bible reading. (Ps. 1:2, 3) Or you may see the need to give attention to the frequency and the quality of your prayers. Perhaps you need to exercise greater self-control in your choice of entertainment and your use of time. (Eph. 5:15, 16) When Jehovah sees you working hard to make further progress, he will be pleased.

<sup>17</sup> You grow as a Christian when you help other people. Jesus said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) You will benefit greatly if you use some of your time and

15. What warning about association did Paul give to Timothy? (2 Timothy 2:20-22)

16. What kind of goals should you choose?

17. What satisfaction comes from helping people?

youthful energy to help others. For example, you can make it your goal to help the elderly and the infirm in your congregation. Perhaps you can run errands for them or assist them with their use of electronic devices. If you are a brother, set the goal of becoming a ministerial servant, with a view to serving your brothers and sisters. (Phil. 2:4) You also show love to those outside the congregation by sharing the good news of the Kingdom with them. (Matt. 9:36, 37) If at all possible, make it your goal to share in some aspect of the full-time ministry.

<sup>18</sup> The full-time ministry can provide you with many opportunities to make spiritual advancement. Serving as a pioneer may open the door for you to attend the School for Kingdom Evangelizers. You may be able to serve at Bethel or on theocratic construction projects. A young pioneer sister named Kaitlyn

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18. How can serving in the full-time ministry help you to grow?

says: “Spending time in the ministry with experienced brothers and sisters was a big factor in helping me grow spiritually after my baptism. Their example motivated me to deepen my Bible knowledge and to improve my teaching ability.”

<sup>19</sup> As you continue to make spiritual progress, you will enjoy many blessings. You will avoid wasting your youth on pursuing empty goals. (1 John 2:17) You will be spared the heartache that can come from making bad decisions. Instead, you will find true success and happiness. (Prov. 16:3) Your good example will encourage your fellow believers, young and old. (1 Tim. 4:12) And most important, you will enjoy the peace and satisfaction that comes from pleasing Jehovah and from having a close friendship with him.—Prov. 23:15, 16.

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19. What blessings will you enjoy as you continue to make spiritual progress?

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| ■ Why do we need to make progress after baptism? | ■ What steps can a young person take with a view to making spiritual progress? | ■ How can setting worthwhile goals help us to make spiritual progress? |
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## SONG 4

“Jehovah Is My Shepherd”

## PREVIEW

We need Jehovah’s help to overcome the adversities we face today. This article assures us that Jehovah watches over his people. He takes note of the challenges that we face individually, and he provides what we need to overcome them.

## Jehovah Watches Over His People

*“The eye of Jehovah watches over those fearing him.”*

—PS. 33:18.

ON THE night before he died, Jesus made a special request to his heavenly Father. He asked Jehovah to watch over his followers. (John 17:15, 20) Of course, Jehovah has always watched over—cared for and protected—his people. However, Jesus knew that his followers would face unprecedented opposition from Satan. Jesus also realized that they would need Jehovah’s help to resist the Devil’s wicked attacks.

<sup>2</sup> Satan’s system puts an immense amount of pressure on true Christians today. We face adversities that can discourage us and even test our loyalty to Jehovah. But as we will see in this article, we have nothing to fear. Jehovah is watching over us—he sees the challenges we are facing, and he is ever ready to help us deal with them. Let us examine two Bible examples that show how Jehovah “watches over those fearing him.”—**Read Psalm 33:18-20.**

### WHEN WE FEEL ALONE

<sup>3</sup> Although we are part of a large family of worshippers, we may occasionally feel alone. For example, young ones may feel alone when explaining their beliefs in front of their classmates at school or when moving to a new congregation. Some of us may feel sad or may struggle with negative emotions, thinking that we have to deal with these feelings on our own. We may hesitate to talk to

1. Why did Jesus ask Jehovah to watch over his followers?
2. According to Psalm 33:18-20, why do we not need to fear adversity?
3. When might we feel alone?



others about how we feel because we worry that they might not understand. And, at times, we may even wonder if anyone really cares. Feeling alone—for whatever reason—can make us feel helpless and anxious. Jehovah never wants us to feel that way. Why can we say that?

<sup>4</sup> Consider the example of the faithful man Elijah. Jezebel had vowed to kill him, so he was running for his life for over 40 days. (1 Ki. 19:1-9) Finally, alone in a cave, he cried out to Jehovah: “I am the only [prophet] left.” (1 Ki. 19:10) There were other prophets in the land; Obadiah had managed to save 100 prophets from Jezebel’s murderous hands. (1 Ki. 18:7, 13) Why, then, did Elijah feel so alone? Did he think that the prophets whom Obadiah saved were now all dead? Did he perhaps feel alone because others did not join him in serving Jehovah after the Baal test at

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4. Why did the prophet Elijah say: “I am the only one left”?

Mount Carmel? Might he have felt that no one knew how much danger he was in, or might he have wondered if anyone cared? The account does not fully explain Elijah’s feelings. But what we do know for sure is that Jehovah understood why Elijah felt alone and that He knew exactly how to help him.

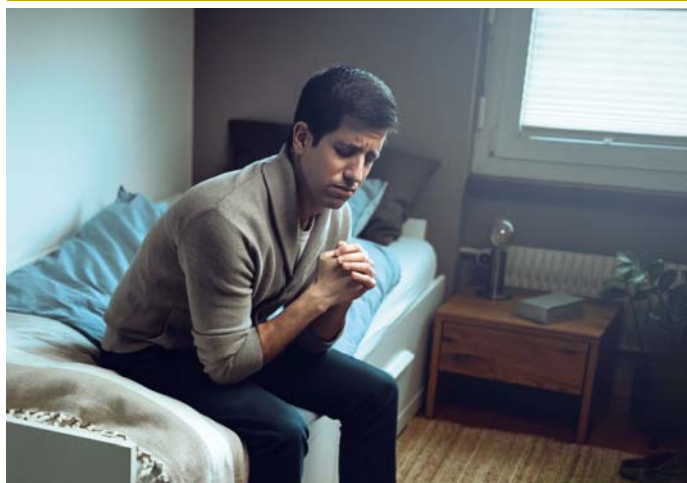
<sup>5</sup> Jehovah helped Elijah in a number of ways. He encouraged Elijah to talk. Twice He asked Elijah: “What are you doing here?” (1 Ki. 19:9, 13) Each time, Jehovah listened as Elijah poured out his heart. Jehovah responded to Elijah by revealing His presence and mighty power. He also assured Elijah that he had many fellow worshippers. (1 Ki. 19:11, 12, 18) No doubt, Elijah felt relieved after pouring out his heart to Jehovah and hearing His response. Jehovah gave Elijah several important assignments. He asked him to anoint Hazael as king

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5. How did Jehovah assure Elijah that he was not alone?



When we feel alone, what comforting lesson can we learn from the way Jehovah helped Elijah?  
(See paragraphs 5-6)





Do you look for ways to expand your ministry and share in it with others?  
(See paragraph 7)

over Syria, Jehu as king over Israel, and Elisha as prophet. (1 Ki. 19:15, 16) By giving Elijah these assignments, Jehovah helped him to focus on positive things. God also provided him with a close companion, Elisha. How can you receive Jehovah's help when you feel alone?

<sup>6</sup> Jehovah invites you to pray to him. He sees what you are dealing with, and he assures you that he will listen to your prayers at any time. (1 Thess. 5:17) He finds pleasure in listening to his worshippers. (Prov. 15:8) What can you pray about when you feel alone? Pour your heart out to Jehovah, as Elijah did. **(Read Psalm 62:8.)** Tell him about your concerns and how they make you feel. Ask Jehovah to help you to cope with your feelings. For example, if you feel

6. What can you pray about when you feel alone?  
(Psalm 62:8)

alone and intimidated when giving a witness at school, ask Jehovah to give you the courage you need to express yourself. You can even ask him for the wisdom to explain your beliefs tactfully. (Luke 21:14, 15) If you are struggling with negative emotions, ask Jehovah to help you to talk with a mature Christian about it. You can ask Jehovah to help the one you are confiding in to listen to you with understanding. Pour your heart out to Jehovah, see how he responds to your prayers, and accept the help of others; you will feel less alone.

<sup>7</sup> Jehovah has given all of us meaningful work to do. You can be confident that he notices and appreciates all that you do to carry out your assignments in the congregation and in the ministry. (Ps. 110:3) How can keeping busy in this work help you when you feel alone? Consider the example of a young brother named Mauricio.\* Shortly after Mauricio got baptized, one of his closest friends gradually began leaving the truth. "Seeing him drift away affected my self-confidence," says Mauricio. "I wondered if I could fulfill my dedication and remain a part of Jehovah's family. I felt alone and thought that no one would understand my feelings." What helped Mauricio? "I expanded my ministry," he says. "That helped me to keep my mind off myself and not dwell on my negative feelings. I felt happy and less alone while working along with others in the ministry." Indeed, even when we cannot preach with fellow believers in person, we

\* Some names have been changed.

7. What do you learn from Mauricio's example?

are strengthened by sharing with them in such activities as letter writing and telephone witnessing. What else helped Mauricio? He adds: “I also kept busy in the congregation. I put my heart into preparing and presenting student assignments. These assignments made me feel appreciated by Jehovah and by others.”

#### WHEN WE FEEL OVERWHELMED BY SEVERE TRIALS

<sup>8</sup> We expect to face trials during these last days. (2 Tim. 3:1) Still, the timing and the nature of our trials can catch us off guard. We may face a sudden economic problem, a devastating medical diagnosis, or the loss of a loved one in death. At such times, we may feel distressed and overwhelmed, especially if it seems that we are facing one trial after another or even several trials all at once. Remember, though, that Jehovah is watching over us, and with his help we can face any trial with confidence.

<sup>9</sup> Consider how Jehovah helped the faithful man Job. He experienced several distressing trials in a short period of time. In one day, Job learned about violent and shocking events that cost him his livestock, killed his servants and, even worse, took the lives of his beloved children. (Job 1:13-19) Soon after, while still dealing with his immense grief, Job was afflicted with a painful and disfiguring disease. (Job 2:7) His situation was so bad that Job exclaimed: “I loathe my life; I do not want to go on living.”—Job 7:16.

<sup>10</sup> Jehovah was watching over Job. Be-

cause Jehovah loved Job, He gave him what he needed to endure his trials successfully. Jehovah spoke to Job, reminding him of His infinite wisdom and loving care for His creatures. He spoke of many awe-inspiring animals. (Job 38: 1, 2; 39:9, 13, 19, 27; 40:15; 41:1, 2) Jehovah also used a faithful young man named Elihu to strengthen and comfort Job. Elihu assured him that Jehovah always rewards His worshippers for their endurance. But Jehovah also moved Elihu to give Job some loving counsel. Elihu helped Job to focus on the big picture by reminding him of his position in relation to Jehovah, the Creator of the universe. (Job 37:14) Jehovah also gave Job an assignment; he was to pray for his three companions who had sinned. (Job 42:8-10) How does Jehovah support us today when we experience difficult trials?

<sup>11</sup> Jehovah does not speak to us directly, as he did with Job, but He does speak to us through His Word, the Bible. (Rom. 15:4) He comforts us by giving us a hope for the future. Consider just a few thoughts from the Bible that can comfort us when we experience trials. In the Scriptures, Jehovah assures us that nothing—and that includes severe trials—“will be able to separate us from [his] love.” (Rom. 8:38, 39) He also assures us that he “is near to all those calling on him” in prayer. (Ps. 145:18) Jehovah tells us that if we rely on him, we can endure any trial and even find a measure of happiness when we suffer. (1 Cor. 10:13; Jas. 1: 2, 12) God’s Word also reminds us that

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8. How can severe trials affect us?

9. Describe some of the trials that Job faced.

10. How did Jehovah provide what Job needed to endure his trials? (See cover picture.)

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11. What comfort does the Bible provide during our trials?

our trials are temporary and brief when compared to the everlasting reward he offers us. (2 Cor. 4:16-18) Jehovah gives us the sure hope that he will eliminate the root cause of all our trials—Satan the Devil and those who imitate his wicked ways. (Ps. 37:10) Have you memorized some comforting Bible passages to help you endure future trials?

<sup>12</sup> Jehovah expects us to set aside time to study the Bible regularly and to think deeply about what we read. When we apply what we learn, our faith grows stronger and we draw closer to our heavenly Father. As a result, we are strengthened to endure trials. Jehovah also gives his holy spirit to those who rely on his Word. And that spirit can give us “the power beyond what is normal” to endure any trial. —2 Cor. 4:7-10.

<sup>13</sup> With Jehovah’s backing, “the faithful and discreet slave” produces an abundance of articles, videos, and music that

12. What does Jehovah expect us to do if we are to benefit fully from his Word?

13. How does the spiritual food that “the faithful and discreet slave” provides help us to endure trials?

can help us to build strong faith and stay alert spiritually. (Matt. 24:45) We need to take full advantage of such timely provisions. A sister from the United States recently expressed her appreciation for all this spiritual food. She said: “During my 40 years of service to Jehovah, my integrity has been tested over and over again.” She faced severe trials—her grandfather was killed by a drunk driver, her parents succumbed to a deadly illness, and she battled cancer on two occasions. What helped her to endure? She explained: “Jehovah has always cared for me. The spiritual food that he has provided through the faithful and discreet slave has helped me to endure. Because of it, I can feel as did Job, who said: ‘Until I die, I will not renounce my integrity!’” —Job 27:5.

<sup>14</sup> Jehovah has trained his people to love and to comfort one another during distressing times. (2 Cor. 1:3, 4; **read 1 Thessalonians 4:9.**) In imitation of Elihu, our brothers and sisters are eager to help us remain faithful when we

14. How does Jehovah use our fellow worshippers to support us during our trials? (1 Thessalonians 4:9)

How can we be a blessing to others in the congregation?  
(See paragraph 14)



experience difficulties. (Acts 14:22) For example, consider how Diane's congregation encouraged her and helped her to stay spiritually strong after her husband suffered a serious health problem. She said: "It was hard. But we felt Jehovah's strong and loving arms during those difficult months. Our congregation stepped in to support us. We received the visits, the phone calls, and the hugs that we needed to keep going. Since I don't drive, the brothers and sisters made sure that I was able to get to the meetings and to get out in field service when I could." What a blessing it is to be part of such a loving spiritual family!

#### **GRATEFUL FOR JEHOVAH'S LOVING CARE**

<sup>15</sup> All of us will face some kind of trial. However, as we have learned, we will never have to face a trial on our own. Like a

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15. Why are we convinced that we can cope with adversity?

loving father, Jehovah is always watching over us. He is by our side, ready to hear our pleas for help and eager to support us. (Isa. 43:2) We are convinced that we can cope with adversity because he has generously provided us with everything we need to endure. He has given us the gift of prayer, the Bible, an abundance of spiritual food, and a loving brotherhood to help us in times of need.

<sup>16</sup> How grateful we are to have a heavenly Father who watches over us! "Our hearts rejoice in him." (Ps. 33:21) We can show Jehovah that we appreciate his loving care by taking advantage of all his provisions to help us. We also need to do our part to remain under God's care. In other words, if we continue to do our best to obey Jehovah and do what is right in his eyes, he will watch over us forever! —1 Pet. 3:12.

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16. How can we remain under Jehovah's loving care?

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#### **HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?**

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| ■ How does Jehovah help us when we feel alone? | ■ How does Jehovah help us when we feel overwhelmed by severe trials? | ■ Why should we appreciate Jehovah's loving care? |
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**SONG 111**

Our Reasons for Joy

**PREVIEW**

We often refer to our beliefs and way of life as “the truth.” Whether we are new in the truth or we have known it all our life, we can benefit greatly by considering why we love the truth. In doing so, we will strengthen our resolve to obtain Jehovah’s approval.

## “Go On Walking in the Truth”

*“Go on walking in the truth.”—3 JOHN 4.*

“HOW did you come into the truth?” No doubt you have answered that question many times. It is one of the first questions that a fellow believer will ask when we are getting acquainted. We love to hear how our brothers and sisters came to know and love Jehovah, and we enjoy telling them what the truth means to us. (Rom. 1:11) As a result of these conversations, we are reminded of just how precious the truth is. We also become even more determined to “go on walking in the truth”—that is, to keep living in a way that will bring Jehovah’s blessing and approval.—3 John 4.

<sup>2</sup> In this article, we will review some of the reasons why we love the truth. Then we will consider how we can continue to show our love for this precious gift. No doubt this review will deepen our appreciation for what Jehovah has done in drawing us to the truth. (John 6:44) It will also strengthen our desire to share the truth with others.

### WHY WE LOVE “THE TRUTH”

<sup>3</sup> We love the truth for many reasons. Most important, we love Jehovah God, the Source of the truth. Through his Word, the Bible, we have come to know him not only

1. How do we benefit from talking about how we came into “the truth”?
2. What will we discuss in this article?
3. What is the most important reason why we love the truth?

as the all-powerful Maker of heaven and earth but also as our loving heavenly Father, who tenderly cares for us. (1 Pet. 5:7) We know that our God is “merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and abundant in loyal love and truth.” (Ex. 34:6) Jehovah loves justice. (Isa. 61:8) It hurts him to see us suffer, and he is ready—yes, eager—to bring all suffering to an end at the appointed time. (Jer. 29:11) How marvelous! No wonder we love Jehovah so much!

<sup>4</sup> What is another reason why we love the truth? The truth brings great benefits to us. Consider an example. Bible truth includes our hope for the future. To illustrate the value of that hope, the apostle Paul wrote: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, both sure and firm.” (Heb. 6:19) Just as an anchor steadies a boat, our Bible-based hope can stabilize us when we face trials in life.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, Paul was discussing the heavenly hope that anointed Christians cherish. But his words also apply to Christians who look forward to living forever on a paradise earth. (John 3:16) Certainly, learning about the hope of everlasting life has given our life meaning.

<sup>6</sup> Consider the experience of a sister named Yvonne. She did not grow up in the truth, and as a child she was afraid of death. She recalls reading a phrase that stuck in her mind: “Someday there

will be no tomorrow.” She says: “Those words made me lie awake at night thinking about the future. ‘Surely there must be more to life,’ I thought. ‘Why am I here?’ I did not want to die!”

<sup>7</sup> Later, as a teenager, Yvonne came in contact with Jehovah’s Witnesses. She relates: “I began to believe that I could have the hope of living forever in Paradise on earth.” How has learning the truth benefited our sister? She adds: “I no longer lie awake at night worrying about the future or death.” As you can imagine, the truth is very precious to Yvonne, and she finds great satisfaction in sharing her hope for the future with others.—1 Tim. 4:16.

<sup>8</sup> Bible truth also includes the good news about God’s Kingdom. Jesus compared the truth about that Kingdom to a hidden treasure. As recorded at Matthew 13:44, Jesus said: “The Kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure, hidden in the field, that a man found and hid; and because of his joy, he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.” Notice that the man was not looking for the treasure. But when he found it, he made major sacrifices to obtain it. In fact, he sold everything he had. Why? He knew how valuable that treasure was. It was worth far more than anything he had to give up.

<sup>9</sup> Is that the way you feel about the truth? No doubt it is! We know that nothing this world has to offer can compare to the joy we have in serving

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4-5. Why did the apostle Paul compare our hope to an anchor?

6-7. How has Yvonne benefited from learning the truth about the future?

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8-9. (a) In one of Jesus’ parables, how much did one man value a treasure he found? (b) What value do you place on the truth?

## Bible Truth Is Like . . .



### An Anchor

Just as an anchor steadies a boat, our Bible-based hope can stabilize us during trials. Bible truth also moves us to share our hope for the future with others

(See paragraphs 4-7)



### A Treasure

Serving Jehovah now and having the prospect of doing so forever under the rule of his Kingdom is like a treasure. It is worth any sacrifice we have to make

(See paragraphs 8-11)



### A Lamp

A powerful lamp helps us to find our way in the darkness. Similarly, God's Word shows us how to find our way through Satan's dark world

(See paragraphs 12-13)



Jehovah now, with the prospect of everlasting life in the future under Kingdom rule. The privilege we have of enjoying a close personal relationship with Jehovah is worth any sacrifice we have to make. Our greatest joy is “to please him fully.”—Col. 1:10.

<sup>10</sup> Many of us have made considerable sacrifices in order to obtain Jehovah’s approval. Some have abandoned prestigious careers in the world. Others have given up the pursuit of wealth. Still others have completely changed the course of their life when they learned about Jehovah. That is what Michael did. He did not grow up in the truth. As a young man, he was trained in martial arts. He says: “I took pride in keeping myself in fit physical condition. At times, I felt invincible.” But when he started studying the Bible, Michael learned Jehovah’s view of violence. (Ps. 11:5) Regarding the Witness couple who studied with him, Michael says: “They never told me that I had to give up martial arts; they simply continued to teach me Bible truth.”

<sup>11</sup> The more Michael learned about Jehovah, the more his love for Him grew. He was especially touched by Jehovah’s compassion for His worshippers. In time, Michael realized that he needed to make a life-changing decision. “I knew that giving up karate would be the hardest thing I had ever done,” he says. “But I also knew that it would please Jehovah, and I was convinced that serving him was worth any sacrifice.” Michael

appreciated the value of the truth he had found, and that appreciation moved him to make big changes in his life.—Jas. 1:25.

<sup>12</sup> To highlight the value of the truth, the Bible compares the truth to a lamp shining in the dark. (Ps. 119:105; Eph. 5:8) Mayli, from Azerbaijan, deeply appreciates the enlightenment she has received from God’s Word. She grew up in a religiously divided household. Her father was Muslim, and her mother was Jewish. She says: “Although I never questioned God’s existence, there were issues that puzzled me. I wondered, ‘Why did God create humans, and for what useful purpose would someone suffer his entire life only to be tormented forever in hell?’ Since people said that everything that happens is God’s will, I wondered, ‘Is God just a puppeteer who enjoys watching people suffer?’”

<sup>13</sup> Mayli continued to search for answers to her questions. In time, she accepted a Bible study and came into the truth. “The Bible’s convincing logic changed my whole outlook on life for the better,” she says. “The credible explanations I found through God’s Word bring me inner peace.” Like Mayli, we all praise Jehovah, “the One who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light.”—1 Pet. 2:9.

<sup>14</sup> These are just a few examples that illustrate the value of the truth. No doubt you can think of many others. Why not

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10-11. What prompted Michael to change the course of his life?

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12-13. How did Bible truth enlighten Mayli?

14. How can we deepen our love for the truth? (See also the box “Additional Comparisons.”)

## Additional Comparisons

In this article, we have seen that “the truth” can be compared to an anchor, to a treasure, and to a lamp. We can compare the value of the truth to other things as well. For example:



Bible truth is like a **mirror**. When we look into it, we can see what we really are on the inside and where we need to make improvements.—Jas. 1:22-25



Just as **water** refreshes us on a hot day, the waters of Bible truth refresh us in this spiritually parched world.—Ps. 23:2, 3

make it a personal study project to find other reasons why we should love the truth? The more we love the truth, the more we will find ways to show our love for it.

### HOW WE SHOW THAT WE LOVE THE TRUTH

<sup>15</sup> We can show that we love the truth by regularly studying the Bible and Bible-based publications. After all, no matter how long we have been in the truth, we always have more to learn. The

15. What is one way that we can show our love for the truth?

very first issue of this magazine stated: “Truth, like a modest little flower in the wilderness of life, is surrounded and *almost* choked by the luxuriant growth of the weeds of error. If you would find it you must be ever on the lookout. . . . If you would possess it you must stoop to get it. Be not content with *one* flower of truth. . . . Gather ever, seek for more.” Study is hard work, but it is well worth the effort.

<sup>16</sup> Not all of us love to read and study.

16. What study method do you find effective? (Proverbs 2:4-6)



But Jehovah invites us to “keep seeking” and to “keep searching” for a deeper understanding of the truth. **(Read Proverbs 2:4-6.)** When we put forth such effort, we always benefit. Regarding his personal Bible reading, Corey says that he focuses on one verse at a time. He explains: “I’ll read every footnote, look up every cross-reference, and do additional research. . . . I get so much out of my reading with this method!” Whether we use that method or another, we show our appreciation for the truth when we put time and effort into studying it.—Ps. 1:1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Of course, we know that it is not enough simply to study the truth. To benefit fully, we must live the truth, that is, apply what we learn in our life. Only

17. What does it mean to live the truth? (James 1:25)

then will the truth bring us real happiness. **(Read James 1:25.)** How can we make sure that we are living the truth? One brother suggests making a personal examination to identify areas where we are doing well and areas where we want to make improvement. The apostle Paul put it this way: “To the extent we have made progress, let us go on walking orderly in this same course.” —Phil. 3:16.

<sup>18</sup> Just think of the benefits that come from doing our best to “go on walking in the truth”! Not only do we improve the quality of our own life but we also bring joy to Jehovah and to our fellow believers. (Prov. 27:11; 3 John 4) Really, could we have any greater reasons to *love* the truth and to *live* the truth?

18. Why do we do our best to “go on walking in the truth”?

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- |                               |   |   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| ■ Why do we love “the truth”? | ■ How can we deepen our appreciation for the truth? | ■ How can we show that we love the truth? |
|-------------------------------|---|---|

## SONG 90

Encourage One Another

## PREVIEW

Life in this system of things is hard. Our fellow believers are under a lot of pressure. We can be a real blessing to them if we look for ways to encourage them. In this regard, it is helpful to consider the example of the apostle Paul.

## Keep “Building One Another Up”

*“Keep encouraging one another and building one another up.”—1 THESS. 5:11.*

HAS your congregation ever built or renovated a Kingdom Hall? If so, no doubt you remember your first meeting in the new facility. You were so grateful to Jehovah. In fact, you may have been so choked up with emotion that you could hardly sing the opening song. Our well-built Kingdom Halls bring praise to Jehovah. But we bring even greater praise to him when we engage in another kind of building work. That work involves something more valuable than literal buildings. It involves building up the people who come to those places of worship. The apostle Paul had in mind this type of figurative building program when he wrote the words found at **1 Thessalonians 5:11**, our theme text.—**Read.**

<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul is an excellent example of someone who knew how to build up his fellow believers. He had empathy for them. In this article, we will consider how he helped his brothers and sisters (1) to endure trials, (2) to be peaceable with one another, and (3) to strengthen their faith in Jehovah. Let us see how we can imitate him and thus build up our brothers and sisters today.—1 Cor. 11:1.

### PAUL HELPED HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS TO ENDURE TRIALS

<sup>3</sup> Paul loved his brothers very much. He was no stranger to hardship; thus, he could show compassion and empathy for fellow believers when they were going through

1. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:11, what work do we all share in?
2. What will we discuss in this article?
3. What balanced view did Paul have?

trials. One time, Paul ran out of funds and had to find work to support himself and his companions. (Acts 20:34) He was a tentmaker by trade. When he arrived in Corinth, he at first worked with fellow tentmakers Aquila and Priscilla. But “every sabbath” he would preach to the Jews and the Greeks. Then when Silas and Timothy arrived, “Paul began to be intensely occupied with the word.” (Acts 18:2-5) Paul never lost sight of his main purpose in life, to serve Jehovah. Hardworking Paul was in a good position to encourage his brothers and sisters. He reminded them not to allow the pressures of life and the need to provide for the family to cause them to neglect “the more important things”—all aspects of Jehovah’s worship.—Phil. 1:10.

<sup>4</sup> Soon after the congregation in Thessalonica was formed, the new believers faced severe opposition. When a mob of vicious opposers could not find Paul and Silas, the mob dragged “some of the brothers to the city rulers,” crying out: “These men act in opposition to the decrees of Caesar.” (Acts 17:6, 7) Can you imagine how shaken those newly converted Christians must have been to find that the men of the city had turned against them? They could have slowed down in their service to Jehovah, but Paul did not want that to happen. Although he and Silas had to leave, they made sure that the fledgling congregation was well cared for. Paul reminded the Thessalonians: “We sent Timothy, our brother . . . , to make you firm

and comfort you regarding your faith, so that no one might be shaken by these tribulations.” (1 Thess. 3:2, 3) Timothy very likely had firsthand experience with persecution in his hometown of Lystra. He had seen how Paul strengthened the brothers there. Having seen the outcome that Jehovah gave, Timothy could assure his new brothers and sisters that everything would turn out well for them too.—Acts 14:8, 19-22; Heb. 12:2.

<sup>5</sup> In what other way did Paul strengthen his fellow believers? On their return visit to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders for them in each congregation.” (Acts 14:21-23) No doubt those appointed men proved to be a source of comfort to the congregations, as the elders are today. Note the comments made by a brother named Bryant: “When I turned 15,” he says, “my father left home and my mother was disfellowshipped. I felt abandoned and discouraged.” What helped Bryant to endure this difficult time? He says: “Tony, an elder, talked with me at meetings and at other times. He told me about those who had faced trials and yet were happy. He shared Psalm 27:10 with me and often spoke about Hezekiah, who served faithfully even though his father was not a good example.” What effect did this practical help have on Bryant? “With Tony’s encouragement,” says Bryant, “I eventually began a satisfying career in full-time service.” Elders, be alert to help those who, like Bryant, may need “a good word” of encouragement.—Prov. 12:25.

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4. How did Paul and Timothy help fellow believers to cope with persecution?

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5. How did a brother named Bryant benefit from the help of an elder?

<sup>6</sup> Paul reminded fellow worshippers that in Jehovah's strength, "a great cloud of witnesses" had endured hardships. (Heb. 12:1) Paul understood how the life stories of those in the past who successfully endured all kinds of hardships could infuse his brothers and sisters with courage and help them keep focused on the "city of the living God." (Heb. 12:22) The same is true today. Who has not been strengthened when reading about how Jehovah helped Gideon, Barak, David, Samuel, and many others? (Heb. 11:32-35) And what about modern-day examples of faith? At world headquarters, we often receive letters from brothers and sisters whose faith has been strengthened after they read the life story of one of Jehovah's modern-day faithful servants.

**PAUL SHOWED HIS BROTHERS  
AND SISTERS HOW TO BE PEACEABLE  
WITH ONE ANOTHER**

<sup>7</sup> We build up our brothers and sisters when we actively promote peace in the congregation. We do not allow differences of opinion to divide us. And we do not insist on our rights where no Scriptural principle is at stake. Consider an example. The congregation in Rome was made up of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. When the Mosaic Law was done away with, the restrictions it had placed on eating certain foods were no longer in force. (Mark 7:19) From

that time on, some Jewish Christians felt free to eat all kinds of foods. Other Jewish Christians, however, could not bring themselves to do so. The congregation became divided over this issue. Paul underscored the importance of keeping peace and observed: "It is best not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything over which your brother stumbles." (**Read Romans 14:19-21.**) Paul thus helped his fellow believers to see how damaging such disputes were to individuals and to the congregation as a whole. He was also willing to change his own behavior to avoid stumbling others. (1 Cor. 9:19-22) We can likewise build others up and maintain peace if we refrain from making issues over matters of personal preference.

<sup>8</sup> Paul set a good example in maintaining peace with those who disagreed about important matters. For instance, some in the first-century congregation insisted that Gentile converts be circumcised, perhaps to avoid criticism by outsiders. (Gal. 6:12) Paul strongly disagreed with that viewpoint, but rather than insist that his way be followed, he humbly referred the matter to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. (Acts 15:1, 2) As a result, his conduct helped those Christians to maintain joy and peace in the congregation.—Acts 15:30, 31.

<sup>9</sup> If a serious dispute does arise, we promote peace by seeking guidance from those whom Jehovah has appointed to

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6. How did Paul use life stories to encourage his brothers and sisters?

7. What do you learn from Paul's counsel recorded at Romans 14:19-21?

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8. How did Paul respond when an important issue threatened the peace of the congregation?

9. How can we follow Paul's example?

care for the congregation. Often, Bible-based direction can be found in our publications or in guidelines provided by the organization. If we focus on following those instructions rather than on promoting our personal views, we will contribute to the peace of the congregation.

<sup>10</sup> Paul promoted peace by highlighting the positive qualities of his brothers and sisters, not their negative traits. For example, in closing his letter to the Romans, Paul mentioned many people by name and in most cases added a positive comment or a personal detail about them. We can imitate Paul by freely mentioning the good qualities of our brothers and sisters. When we do, we give our brothers and sisters added reason for drawing close to one another, which builds up the congregation in love.

<sup>11</sup> At times, even mature Christians may disagree or argue with each other. That happened to Paul and his close friend Barnabas. These two men strongly disagreed about whether to take Mark with them on their next missionary trip. There was “a sharp burst of anger” between them, and they parted ways. (Acts 15:37-39) But Paul, Barnabas, and Mark mended the rift in their relationship, showing that they placed value on the peace and unity of the congregation. Paul later spoke well of Barnabas and Mark. (1 Cor. 9:6; Col. 4:10) We too need to resolve any differences we might have with others in the congregation and then continue to focus on their good quali-

ties. In that way, we will promote peace and unity.—Eph. 4:3.

#### **PAUL STRENGTHENED THE FAITH OF HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS**

<sup>12</sup> We build up our brothers and sisters when we strengthen their faith in Jehovah. Some are ridiculed by unbelieving family members or by workmates or schoolmates. Others are dealing with serious health problems or are struggling to overcome hurt feelings. Still others have been baptized Christians for years and have been waiting a long time for this system of things to end. These situations can be a test of faith for Christians today. Members of the first-century congregation faced similar challenges. What did Paul do to strengthen his brothers and sisters?

<sup>13</sup> *Paul used the Scriptures to build up the faith of his brothers and sisters.* For example, Jewish Christians may have felt at a loss to answer the criticisms of unbelieving family members who claimed that Judaism was superior to Christianity. No doubt Paul’s letter to the Hebrews greatly strengthened those Christians. (Heb. 1:5, 6; 2:2, 3; 9:24, 25) They could use his powerful reasonings to silence their accusers. Today, we can help fellow believers who face ridicule to make use of our Bible-based publications to explain the reasons for their convictions. And if our young ones are made fun of for believing in creation, we can help them find information in the brochures *Was*

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10. What else did Paul do to promote peace in the congregation?

11. How can we restore peace when differences arise?

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12. What are some of the challenges that our brothers and sisters face?

13. How did Paul help those who were ridiculed for their beliefs?





*Life Created?* and *The Origin of Life—Five Questions Worth Asking* to show why they believe that life was created.

<sup>14</sup> ***Paul encouraged his brothers and sisters to show love through “fine works.”*** (Heb. 10:24) He helped his brothers and sisters not only by what he said but also by what he did. For example, when fellow believers in Judea faced a famine, Paul helped distribute relief to them. (Acts 11:27-30) In fact, even though Paul was busy preaching and teaching, he always looked for ways to help those who needed material assistance. (Gal. 2:10) By so doing, he built up his fellow believers’ confidence that Jehovah would care for them. Today, when we volunteer our time, effort, and skills to help with disaster relief, we too build up the faith of our brothers and sisters. The same happens when we regularly donate toward the worldwide work. In these and other ways, we help our brothers and sisters to trust that Jehovah will never abandon them.

<sup>15</sup> ***Paul did not give up on those whose faith had become weak.*** He showed compassion for them and spoke to them in a warm and positive way. (Heb. 6:9; 10:39) For example, throughout his letter to the Hebrews, he often used the words “we” and “us,” thereby recognizing that he too had to apply the counsel he gave. (Heb. 2:1, 3) Like Paul, we do not give up on those whose faith has become weak. Instead, we build them up by showing genuine interest in them. In this way, we

14. Even though Paul was busy preaching and teaching, what did he do?

15-16. How should we treat those whose faith has become weak?

Like the apostle Paul,  
how can we build up others?  
(See paragraphs 13-16)

confirm our love for them. Our warm and gentle tone can be just as upbuilding as anything we might say.

<sup>16</sup> Paul reassured his brothers and sisters that Jehovah was aware of their good works. (Heb. 10:32-34) We can do something similar when assisting a fellow believer whose faith has grown weak. We might have him recount how he came into the truth or encourage him to think back on occasions when he felt Jehovah's support. We can use the opportunity to assure him that Jehovah has not forgotten past acts of love and that He will not abandon him in the future. (Heb. 6:10; 13:5, 6) These conversations may stir up in these dear ones a desire to continue in His service.

#### **“KEEP ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER”**

<sup>17</sup> Just as a construction worker improves his skills over time, we too can become more effective in building one another up. We can help others gain strength to endure trials by sharing with them examples of those who endured in the past. We can promote peace by mentioning the good we see in others, preserve peace when it is threatened, and re-

17. What skills can we continue to develop?

store peace when differences arise. And we can continue to build up the faith of our brothers and sisters by sharing with them important Bible truths, by providing practical help, and by supporting any who have become weak spiritually.

<sup>18</sup> Those who work on theocratic building projects feel happy and content. We can experience happiness and contentment when we help with the spiritual building work in the congregation. Unlike physical buildings that will eventually decay, the results of our work can last an eternity! May we be determined to “keep encouraging one another and building one another up.”—1 Thess. 5:11.

18. What are you determined to do?

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**PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 24:** (Top) A father shows his daughter how she can use the suggestions found in our publications to resist pressure to celebrate Christmas. (Middle) A couple have traveled to another part of the country to help with disaster relief. (Bottom) An elder visits a brother whose faith has become weak. He shows the brother some pictures of the Pioneer Service School that they attended together years ago. The pictures bring back memories of the joyful time they had. The brother begins to long for the joy he felt when he served Jehovah. In time, he returns to the congregation.

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## **HOW CAN YOU . . .**

- help others to endure trials?
- promote peace?
- strengthen those whose faith has become weak?

**SONG 9**

Jehovah Is Our King!

**PREVIEW**

Righteous people are hard to find in this wicked world. Yet, millions today are following a righteous course. No doubt you are among them. You pursue that course because you love Jehovah, and Jehovah loves righteousness. How can we grow in our love for this beautiful attribute? This article will consider what righteousness is and how we benefit from loving it. We will also discuss what steps we can take to strengthen our love for this quality.

## Jehovah's People Love Righteousness

*“Happy are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness.”—MATT. 5:6.*

JACOB'S son Joseph faced a difficult test. “Lie down with me,” a woman said to him. She was the wife of his master, Potiphar. Joseph refused her offer. Someone today might wonder, ‘Why did Joseph resist this temptation?’ Potiphar was away. Moreover, Joseph was a slave in the household; this woman could surely have made his life miserable for turning her down. Yet, Joseph kept refusing her persistent advances. Why? He said: “How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?”—Gen. 39:7-12.

<sup>2</sup> How did Joseph know that his God would consider adultery as an act of “great badness”? The Mosaic Law, which included the clear command “You must not commit adultery,” would not be written down for another two hundred years. (Ex. 20:14) Still, Joseph knew Jehovah well enough to perceive how He would feel about immoral conduct. For example, Joseph surely knew that Jehovah designed marriage to be between one man and one woman. And he would have heard how Jehovah on two occasions intervened to protect the honor of his great-grandmother Sarah when she was in danger of being violated. In a similar way, God intervened to protect Isaac's wife, Rebekah. (Gen. 2:24; 12:14-20; 20:2-7; 26:6-11) As Joseph reasoned on such matters, he discerned what was right and what was wrong in God's eyes. Because Joseph loved his God, he also loved Jehovah's

1. What test did Joseph face, and how did he react?
2. How did Joseph know that adultery was a sin against God?

standards of righteousness, and he was determined to uphold them.

<sup>3</sup> Do you love righteousness? No doubt you do. But we all are imperfect, and if we are not careful, the world's view of righteousness can easily affect us. (Isa. 5:20; Rom. 12:2) So we will consider what righteousness is and how we benefit from loving it. Then we will discuss three steps we can take to help us strengthen our love for Jehovah's standards.

### WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

<sup>4</sup> When people think of a righteous person, many may think of someone who is smug, judgmental, or self-righteous. But God does not like those qualities at all. When Jesus was on earth, he strongly criticized the religious leaders of his day for setting up their own standards of righteousness. (Eccl. 7:16; Luke 16:15) Genuine righteousness is not in any way like self-righteousness.

<sup>5</sup> Righteousness is a beautiful quality. Simply put, it means doing what is right in the eyes of Jehovah God. In the Bible, the words for "righteousness" convey the idea of living by the highest of standards—Jehovah's standards. For example, Jehovah decreed that merchants should use an "honest weight." (Deut. 25:15) The original Hebrew word translated "honest" can also be translated "righteous." Thus, a Christian who wants to be righteous in God's eyes will

be completely honest in all his business dealings. A righteous man also loves justice—he hates to see someone treated unfairly. And "in order to please [Jehovah] fully," a person who is truly righteous considers how He will view the decisions he makes.—Col. 1:10.

<sup>6</sup> The Bible describes Jehovah as the Source of righteousness. For that reason, he is called "the dwelling place of righteousness." (Jer. 50:7) As the Creator, Jehovah is the only one who can properly set the standards for what is right and what is wrong. Because Jehovah is perfect, his sense of what is right and what is wrong is far above our own view, which is often influenced by our imperfection and sin. (Prov. 14:12; **read Isaiah 55:8, 9.**) However, because we are made in God's image, we are able to live by his standards of righteousness. (Gen. 1:27) And we love to do so. Our love for our Father moves us to imitate him to the best of our ability.—Eph. 5:1.

<sup>7</sup> We benefit by adhering to Jehovah's standards of right and wrong. Can you see why? Imagine what would happen if every bank came up with its own standards for determining the value of currency or if each construction company followed its own standards of measurements. The result would be chaos. And if medical personnel failed to adhere to consistent standards of care, some patients might die. Certainly, reliable standards are a protection. Likewise, God's standards of right and wrong protect us.

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3. What will we consider in this discussion?

4. What wrong idea do many have about righteousness?

5. According to the Bible, what is righteousness? Give examples.

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6. Why can we have confidence in Jehovah's standards of right and wrong? (Isaiah 55:8, 9)

7. Why do we need reliable standards? Illustrate.

<sup>8</sup> Jehovah blesses those who try to live by his standards. He promises: “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.” (Ps. 37: 29) Can you imagine how united, peaceful, and happy mankind will be when everyone follows Jehovah’s standards? Jehovah wants you to enjoy that kind of life. Surely, each one of us has good reasons to love righteousness! How can we strengthen our love of this quality? Let us consider three steps we can take.

### STRENGTHEN YOUR LOVE OF JEHOVAH’S STANDARDS

<sup>9</sup> **Step 1: Love the Person who sets the standards.** In order to love righteousness, we need to grow in our love for the One who sets the standards of right and wrong. The more we love Jehovah, the more we will want to live by his righteous standards. To illustrate: If Adam and Eve had loved Jehovah, they would never have disobeyed his just law.—Gen. 3:1-6, 16-19.

<sup>10</sup> We certainly do not want to make the same mistake that Adam and Eve made. We can avoid that outcome if we keep learning about Jehovah, appreciating his qualities, and trying to understand his way of thinking. As we do, our love for Jehovah is sure to grow. Consider Abraham. He truly loved Jehovah. Even when he found it hard to grasp Jehovah’s decisions, Abraham did not rebel. Instead, he tried to get to know

Jehovah better. For example, when he learned of Jehovah’s decision to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham was at first afraid that “the Judge of all the earth” would sweep away the righteous along with the wicked. To Abraham, that seemed unthinkable, so he humbly asked Jehovah a series of questions. Jehovah patiently answered him. Finally, Abraham came to realize that Jehovah examines the heart of every human and that He never punishes the innocent along with the guilty.—Gen. 18:20-32.

<sup>11</sup> Abraham was deeply affected by the conversation he had with Jehovah about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He no doubt came to love and respect his Father even more than he did before. Years later, Abraham’s ability to trust in Jehovah was severely put to the test. Jehovah asked him to sacrifice his own beloved son Isaac. But Abraham was now better acquainted with his God, so this time he had no questions for Him. Abraham simply set out to do what Jehovah asked of him. Still, imagine how heart-wrenching it was for him as he prepared for the task! Abraham must have thought deeply about what he had learned regarding Jehovah. He knew that Jehovah would never do anything unrighteous or unloving. According to the apostle Paul, Abraham reasoned that Jehovah would be able to resurrect his dear son Isaac. (Heb. 11:17-19) After all, Jehovah had promised that Isaac would father a nation, and at that point, Isaac had no children. Abraham

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8. What blessings await those who love to do what is right?

9. What will help us to love righteousness?

10. How did Abraham grow in his understanding of Jehovah?

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11. How did Abraham show that he loved Jehovah and trusted in Him?





Your righteousness can be  
“like the waves of the sea”  
(See paragraphs 16-17)

loved Jehovah, so he trusted that his Father would act with righteousness. In faith he obeyed, difficult though it was. —Gen. 22:1-12.

<sup>12</sup> How can we imitate Abraham? Like him, we need to keep learning about Jehovah. As we do, we will draw closer to him and love him even more. (**Read Psalm 73:28.**) Our conscience will be trained to reflect God’s thinking. (Heb. 5:14) As a result, when someone tries to tempt us to do something wrong, we will refuse. We will hate the very idea of doing anything that would bring pain to our Father and would damage our relationship with him. How else, though, can we show that we love righteousness?

<sup>13</sup> **Step 2: Work at developing love for righteousness day by day.** We can develop love for Jehovah’s standards of right-

eousness in much the same way that we strengthen a muscle—through regular, steady effort. This is work that you can do on a daily basis. Jehovah is reasonable, and he never expects us to do more than what we can. (Ps. 103:14) He assures us that “he loves the one who *pursues* righteousness.” (**Read Proverbs 15:9.**) If we are pursuing a specific goal in Jehovah’s service, we keep putting forth effort to reach it. The same is true when we pursue righteousness. And Jehovah will patiently help us to make progress, to improve steadily over time. —Ps. 84:5, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Jehovah lovingly reminds us that righteousness is not a burden. (1 John 5:3) On the contrary, it is a protection, something we need every day. Remember the spiritual suit of armor that the apostle Paul described. (Eph. 6:14-18) Which

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12. How can we imitate Abraham? (Psalm 73:28)

13. How can we pursue righteousness? (Proverbs 15:9)

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14. What is “the breastplate of righteousness,” and why do we need it?

part protected the soldier's heart? It was "the breastplate of righteousness," which represents Jehovah's righteous standards. Just as a breastplate protects the literal heart, so Jehovah's righteous standards can protect your figurative heart, the person you are on the inside. By all means, then, make sure that your suit of armor includes the breastplate of righteousness!—Prov. 4:23.

<sup>15</sup> How can you put on the breastplate of righteousness? You can do so by taking into account God's standards in the choices you make every day. When deciding what to talk about, what music to listen to, what entertainment to watch, or what books to read, first ask yourself: 'What would I be feeding my heart? Would this material meet with Jehovah's approval? Or does it promote immorality, violence, greed, selfishness—things that Jehovah views as unrighteous?' (Phil. 4:8) If the decisions you make are in harmony with Jehovah's will, you will be allowing his righteous standards to protect your heart.

<sup>16</sup> Do you ever worry about whether you can continue living by Jehovah's righteous standards day after day, year after year? Consider an illustration that Jehovah uses, found at **Isaiah 48:18. (Read.)** Jehovah promises that our righteousness can be "like the waves of the sea." Imagine that you are standing on the shore of a wide sea, watching the waves roll in endlessly, one after another. In that peaceful setting, would you

worry that one day those waves might simply stop? No! You know that waves have been breaking on that beach for thousands of years, and they will surely keep on coming.

<sup>17</sup> Your righteousness can be just like the waves of the sea! How? When you have a decision to make, first consider what Jehovah would want you to do. Then follow through. No matter how difficult the decision might be, your loving Father will always be there to help you to remain constant and steady and to live your life day after day according to His righteous standards.—Isa. 40:29-31.

<sup>18</sup> **Step 3: Leave the judging to Jehovah.** While we try hard to live by Jehovah's righteous standards, we must avoid judging others and becoming self-righteous. Rather than look down on others as if we had the right to judge them based on our own standards, we keep in mind that Jehovah is "the Judge of all the earth." (Gen. 18:25) Jehovah has not entrusted such judging to us. In fact, Jesus commands: "Stop judging that you may not be judged."—Matt. 7:1.\*

<sup>19</sup> Let us again consider the example of the righteous man Joseph. He avoided judging others, even those who treated him badly. His own brothers assaulted him, sold him into slavery, and con-

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\* Congregation elders must at times judge matters involving serious sin and repentance. (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:5; Jas. 5:14, 15) However, they humbly keep in mind that they cannot read hearts and that they are judging for Jehovah. (Compare 2 Chronicles 19:6.) They carefully apply God's balanced, merciful standards of justice.

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15. How can you put on the breastplate of righteousness?

16-17. How does Isaiah 48:18 assure us that we can live by Jehovah's standards forever?

18. Why must we avoid judging others by our own standards?

19. How did Joseph show that he trusted in Jehovah's judgment?

vinced their father that Joseph was dead. Years later, Joseph was reunited with his family. Now a powerful head of state, Joseph could have judged his brothers harshly and sought vengeance. Joseph's brothers were afraid he might do exactly that, even though they were sincerely sorry for what they had done. But Joseph assured them: "Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God?" (Gen. 37:18-20, 27, 28, 31-35; 50:15-21) Joseph humbly left the judging to Jehovah.

<sup>20</sup> Like Joseph, we leave the judging to Jehovah. For example, we do not presume to know what motivates our brothers and sisters to act as they do. We cannot read hearts; only "Jehovah examines the motives." (Prov. 16:2) He loves all kinds of people, from all different backgrounds and cultures. And Jehovah encourages us to "open [our] hearts wide." (2 Cor. 6:13) We seek to love all in our spiritual family, not to judge them.

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20-21. How can we avoid being self-righteous?

<sup>21</sup> This also means that we are not to judge those outside the congregation. (1 Tim. 2:3, 4) Would you ever judge a relative who does not share your faith, saying, "That man will never come into the truth"? No, that would be presumptuous, self-righteous. Jehovah is still giving "all people everywhere" an opportunity to repent. (Acts 17:30) Always remember that ***self-righteousness is a form of unrighteousness***.

<sup>22</sup> May our love for Jehovah's standards of righteousness promote joy and inspire others, helping them to draw closer to us and to our God. May we never stop "hungering and thirsting for righteousness." (Matt. 5:6) Be assured that Jehovah takes note of your efforts and that he is always pleased with your progress. As this world plunges deeper and deeper into unrighteousness, take comfort! Always remember that "Jehovah loves the righteous."—Ps. 146:8.

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22. Why are you resolved to love righteousness?

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- |                          |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| ■ What is righteousness? | ■ How do we benefit from applying Jehovah's standards of righteousness? | ■ How can we strengthen our love for Jehovah's standards of righteousness? |
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