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STUDY EDITION

STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE WEEKS OF:

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Help Those Who Stray From the Flock

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

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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

Study Articles 1, 2 PAGES 8-16

Learn how elders and others can help fellow believers who have strayed from the flock of God. These articles explain what you might do to assist inactive Christians. Note, too, how those who return can expect to be received.

Study Article 3 PAGES 23-27

Reasonable concern about our health is natural. Therefore, Jehovah's Witnesses accept medical help and other forms of treatment. However, "soundness of mind" is essential. (Titus 2:12) Above all, we need to take care of our spiritual health and strengthen our relationship with God.

Study Article 4 PAGES 27-31

Learn how Jesus Christ set an example in opposing the Devil. This article shows why God had confidence in his Son. It shows how Jesus successfully opposed Satan and points out how we too can do so.

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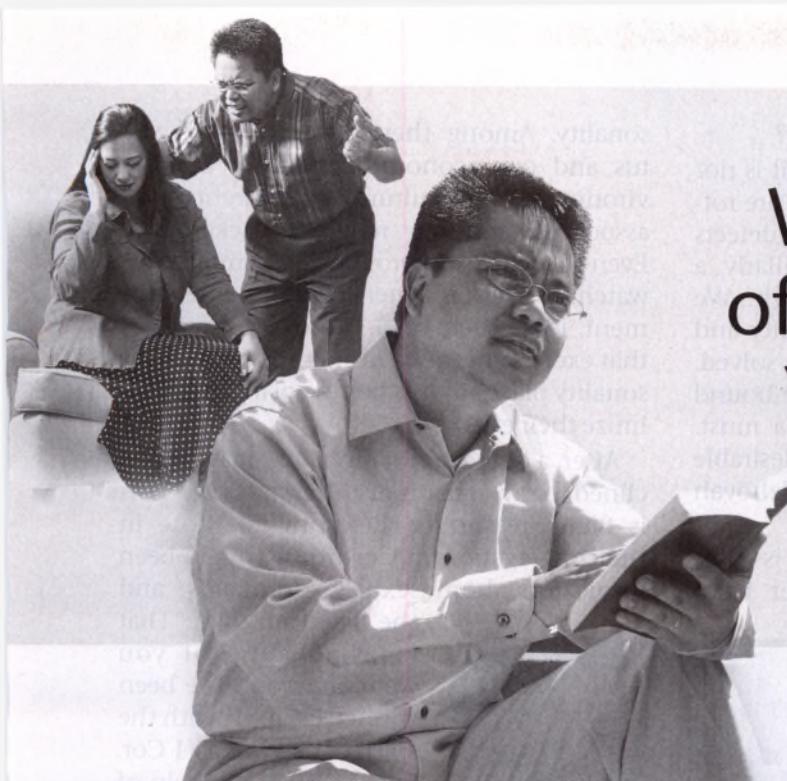


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What Kind of Person Do You Want to Be?

THE chief of police in a town in the Philippines asked a pioneer, "What did you do to get that man to change his conduct?" Pointing to the stack of papers on his desk, he added: "Did you know that all of these are records of past judicial cases against him? You have relieved us of one of our headaches in this town." The man in question had been a drunken brawler who constantly caused trouble. What moved him to make tremendous changes in his life? It was the inspired message of God's Word, the Bible.

Many individuals have taken to heart the apostle Paul's counsel to 'put away the old personality which conformed to their former course of conduct and put on the new personality created according to God's will.' (Eph. 4:22-24) Whether the changes we need to make are big or small, putting on the new personality is part of embracing Christianity.

Our making changes and progressing to

the point of qualifying for baptism, though, is only a beginning. When presenting ourselves for water immersion, we are much like a piece of wood that has been carved into a basic shape. The object is identifiable, but much work remains to be done. The carver still needs to add the finer details in order to make the object beautiful. At the time of baptism, we have the basic qualities required to be a servant of God. However, our new personality is still in its early stage. We must continue to enhance it by making adjustments.

Even Paul saw the need to make improvements. He admitted: "When I wish to do what is right, what is bad is present with me." (Rom. 7:21) Paul was certainly aware of what he himself was and what he wished to be. What about us? We too need to ask ourselves: 'What is present with me? What kind of person am I? And what kind of person do I want to become?' [Continued on page 3]

What Is “Present With Me”?

When we renovate an old house, it is not enough to paint the outside if there are rotten beams inside. Ignoring structural defects would only invite trouble later. Similarly, a veneer of uprightness is not enough. We must get to the core of our personality and recognize problems that need to be solved. Otherwise, old personality traits are bound to resurface. Self-scrutiny, then, is a must. (2 Cor. 13:5) We need to identify undesirable traits and correct them. To that end, Jehovah has provided us with help.

Paul wrote: “The word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12) The message of God’s written Word, the Bible, can have a powerful influence on our lives. It pierces deep down within us—figuratively to the marrow in the innermost part of the bones. It reveals our thoughts and motives, exposing what we really are inside as compared to what we appear to be on the outside or what we think we are. What help God’s Word is in enabling us to recognize our problems!

When we repair an old house, it may not be enough to replace the damaged materials. Knowing the cause of the defects helps us to take measures that will prevent the recurrence of problems. Likewise, not only identifying our negative traits but also isolating what has caused or contributed to them can help us keep our weaknesses under control. Numerous factors go into shaping our per-

sonality. Among them are our social status and our economic situation, our environment, our culture, our parents, our associates, and our religious background. Even the television programs and movies we watch, as well as other forms of entertainment, leave their mark. Recognizing things that exercise negative influences on our personality places us in a better position to minimize their effect.

After a self-examination, we may be inclined to say, ‘That is just the way I am.’ This is faulty reasoning. Referring to those in the congregation in Corinth who had been fornicators, homosexuals, drunkards, and

the like, Paul said: “That is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean . . . with the spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6:9-11) With the help of Jehovah’s holy spirit, we too can succeed in making necessary changes.

Consider the case of a man named Marcos,* who lives in the Philippines. Commenting on his background, Marcos said: “My parents were always arguing. That is why I rebelled at the age of 19.” Marcos became notorious for gambling, thievery, and holdups. He and some others were even going to hijack an airplane, although the plan did not materialize. Marcos’ bad practices continued after he got married. He eventually lost everything he had to gambling. Shortly thereafter, Marcos joined his wife in a Bible study that Jehovah’s Witnesses were conducting with her. At first, he felt unworthy of becoming a Witness. However, applying what he was learning and attending meetings helped Marcos



Would it be sufficient to paint the outside of this storm-battered house?

* Not his real name.

to abandon his former ways. He is now a baptized Christian who regularly shares in teaching others how they too can change.

What Do You Want to Be?

What changes may we need to make in order to enhance our Christian qualities? Paul counsels Christians: "Put them all away from you, wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech, and obscene talk out of your mouth. Do not be lying to one another. Strip off the old personality with its practices." The apostle continues: "Clothe yourselves with the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it."—Col. 3:8-10.

Our primary goal, then, is to put away the old personality and put on the new. Cultivating what qualities will help us to that end? Paul says: "Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering. Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also. But, besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union." (Col. 3:12-14) Putting forth conscientious effort to cultivate these qualities will help us to be "more likable both from Jehovah's standpoint and from that of men." (1 Sam. 2:26) When on earth, Jesus outstandingly displayed godly qualities. By studying and imitating his example, we can become more



*Has your
personality
become Christlike?*

Christlike as "imitators of God."—Eph. 5:1, 2.

Another way to discern what changes we may need to make is by studying the personality traits of Bible characters, considering what was attractive about them and what was not. For example, think of Joseph, the son of the patriarch Jacob. Despite experiencing injustices, Joseph maintained a positive spirit and an inner beauty.

(Gen. 45:1-15) On the other hand, King David's son Absalom feigned great concern for the people and was praised for his beauty. In reality, however, he was a traitor and a murderer. (2 Sam. 13:28, 29; 14:25; 15:1-12) Mock goodness and physical attractiveness do not make one truly appealing.

We Can Succeed

To change for the better and be beautiful in God's eyes, we need to give attention to the inner person. (1 Pet. 3:3, 4) Making changes in our personality calls for identifying our negative traits and the factors that cause or contribute to them, as well as cultivating godly qualities. Can we be confident that our efforts to make such improvements will meet with success?

Yes, with Jehovah's help we can make needed changes. Like the psalmist, we can pray: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." (Ps. 51:10) We can ask for God's spirit to act within us, enhancing our desire to conform our lives more fully to his will. We can, indeed, succeed in becoming more attractive in Jehovah's eyes!

Serving God With “One Heart and Soul”



JEWS and proselytes gather around the disciples of Jesus Christ. It is the Festival of Pentecost, and these visitors have come to Jerusalem from as far away as Rome to the west and Parthia to the east. Various languages are heard in this crowd. Yet, Jesus' disciples who are talking to them are Galileans. Some of the bewildered visitors ask: “How is it we are hearing, each one of us, his own language in which we were born?”—Acts 2:8.

The apostle Peter stands up and explains the basis for the miracle they are witness-

WAYS IN WHICH SOME CHOOSE TO GIVE

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLDWIDE WORK

Many set aside, or budget, an amount that they place in the contribution boxes labeled “Worldwide Work.”

Each month, congregations forward these amounts to the office of Jehovah’s Witnesses that serves their respective countries. Voluntary donations of money may also be sent directly to **Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., Attention Treasurer’s Office, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201-2483**, or to the branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses that serves your country. Checks sent to the above address should be made payable to “Watchtower.” Jewelry or other valuables may be donated as well. A brief letter stating

that such items are an outright gift should accompany these contributions.

CONDITIONAL-DONATION TRUST ARRANGEMENT

Money may be placed in trust with Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania for use worldwide. However, upon request the funds will be returned. For more information, please contact the Treasurer’s Office by writing to the address noted above or by telephoning (718) 560-7500.

CHARITABLE PLANNING

In addition to outright gifts of money, there are other methods of giving to benefit Kingdom service worldwide. These include:

Insurance: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania may be named as the

beneficiary of a life insurance policy or a retirement/pension plan.

Bank Accounts: Bank accounts, certificates of deposit, or individual retirement accounts may be placed in trust for or made payable on death to Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, in accord with local bank requirements.

Stocks and Bonds: Stocks and bonds may be donated to Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania as an outright gift.

Real Estate: Salable real estate may be donated either by making an outright gift or, in the case of residential property, by reserving a life estate to the donor, who can continue to live therein during his or her lifetime. Contact the

ing. The response is immediate. Thousands of new ones are baptized! (Acts 2:41) Although the congregation grows rapidly, it remains united. "The multitude of those who had believed had one heart and soul," says the Bible writer Luke.—Acts 4:32.

Thousands who got baptized on the day of Pentecost in 33 C.E. wanted to remain in Jerusalem longer in order to learn more about their new faith. But they had not come with the thought of staying for some time. Hence, there was a temporary pooling of financial resources. Certain believers voluntarily sold

possessions and brought the proceeds to the apostles for distribution to those in need. (Acts 2:42-47) What a fine spirit of love and generosity!

True Christians have always had such a loving and generous spirit. Today, the Christian congregation continues to serve Jehovah unitedly with "one heart and soul." Individual Christians generously contribute their time, energy, and funds to preach the good news and promote the interests of God's Kingdom.—See the box "Ways in Which Some Choose to Give."

branch office in your country before deeding any real estate.

Gift Annuity: A gift annuity is an arrangement whereby one transfers money or securities to a designated corporation that is used by Jehovah's Witnesses. In exchange, the donor, or someone designated by the donor, receives a specified annuity payment every year for life. The donor receives an income-tax deduction for the year in which the gift annuity is established.

Wills and Trusts: Property or money may be bequeathed to Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania by means of a legally executed will, or Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania may be named as beneficiary of a trust agreement. A trust benefiting a religious organi-

zation may provide certain tax advantages.

As the term "charitable planning" implies, these types of donations typically require some planning on the part of the donor. To assist individuals desiring to benefit the worldwide work of Jehovah's Witnesses through some form of charitable planning, a brochure has been prepared in English and Spanish entitled *Charitable Planning to Benefit Kingdom Service Worldwide*.

The brochure was written to provide information on a variety of ways that gifts may be made either now or through a bequest at death. After reading the brochure and conferring with their own legal or tax advisers, many have been able to help support our religious and humanitarian activities

worldwide and maximize their tax benefits while doing so. This brochure may be obtained by requesting a copy directly from the Charitable Planning Office.

For more information, you may contact the Charitable Planning Office, either in writing or by telephone, at the address listed below, or you may contact the branch office that serves your country.

Charitable Planning Office
Watch Tower Bible and Tract
Society of Pennsylvania
100 Watchtower Drive
Patterson, New York
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HELP THOSE WHO STRAY FROM THE FLOCK

"Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost."—LUKE 15:6.

J EHOVAH'S only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is called "the great shepherd of the sheep." (Heb. 13:20) The Scriptures foretold his coming and showed that he was a unique Shepherd who sought to find the "lost sheep" of Israel. (Matt. 2:1-6; 15:24) Moreover, as a literal shepherd might give his life in order to protect his sheep, Jesus died as a ransom sacrifice for sheeplike ones who would avail themselves of his sacrifice. —John 10:11, 15; 1 John 2:1, 2.

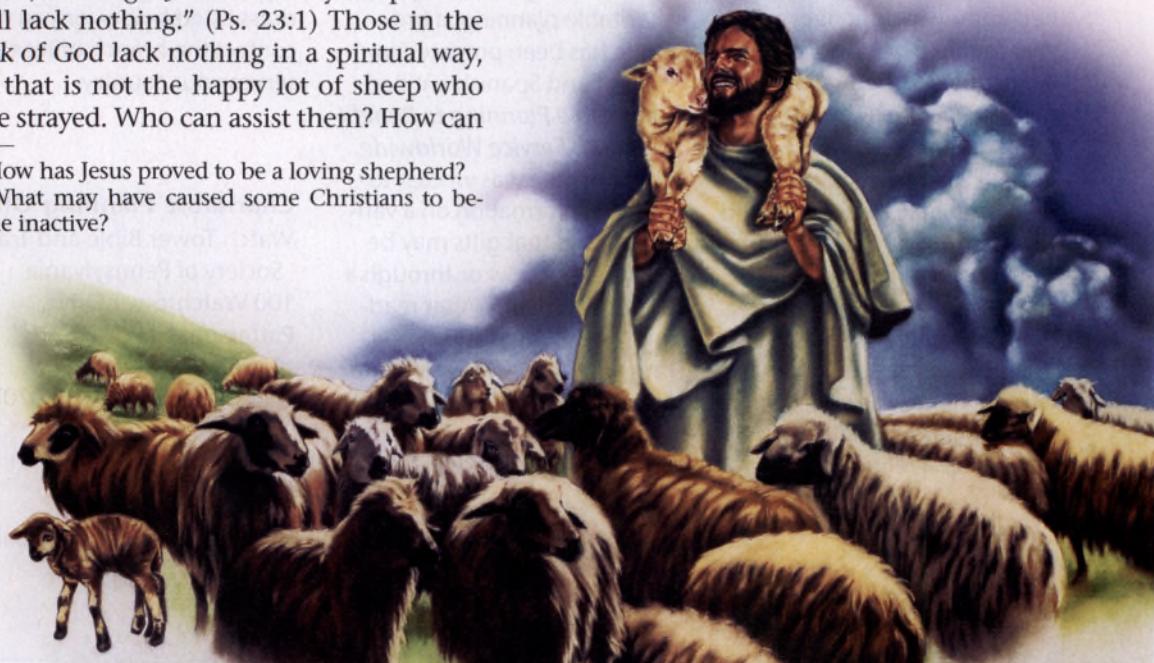
² Sadly, some who seemed to appreciate Jesus' sacrifice and made a dedication to God no longer associate with the Christian congregation. Discouragement, health problems, or other factors may have weakened their zeal and caused them to become inactive. However, only as part of God's flock can they enjoy the serenity and happiness that David spoke of in the 23rd Psalm. For instance, he sang: "Jehovah is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing." (Ps. 23:1) Those in the flock of God lack nothing in a spiritual way, but that is not the happy lot of sheep who have strayed. Who can assist them? How can

aid be provided? Indeed, what can be done to help them return to the flock?

Who Can Help?

³ Earnest effort is required to rescue lost sheep of God's pasturage. (Ps. 100:3) Jesus illustrated this when he said: "If a certain man comes to have a hundred sheep and one of them gets strayed, will he not leave the ninety-nine upon the mountains and set out on a search for the one that is straying? And if he happens to find it, I certainly tell you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that have not strayed. Likewise it is not a desirable thing with my Father who is in heaven for one of these little ones to perish." (Matt. 18:12-14) Who can help sheeplike individuals who have strayed from the flock?

3. How did Jesus show what is needed to rescue lost sheep of God's pasturage?



⁴ If Christian elders are to help sheep who have strayed, they must bear in mind that the flock of God is a congregation of people dedicated to Jehovah—yes, a precious ‘flock of God’s pasturage.’ (Ps. 79:13) Such dear sheep need tender care, and this means that loving shepherds must take a personal interest in them. Making friendly shepherding calls on them can be very effective. Loving encouragement that a shepherd gives them may build them up spiritually and increase their desire to return to the flock.—1 Cor. 8:1.

⁵ Shepherds of God’s flock have the duty to search for sheep who have strayed and then to try to help them. The apostle Paul reminded Christian elders from ancient Ephesus of their shepherding responsibilities when he said: “Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son.” (Acts 20:28) Similarly, the apostle Peter gave anointed older men this exhortation: “Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; neither as lording it over those who are God’s inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock.”—1 Pet. 5:1-3.

⁶ Christian shepherds need to imitate “the fine shepherd,” Jesus. (John 10:11) He was deeply concerned about God’s sheep and stressed the importance of caring for them when he told Simon Peter to ‘shepherd His little sheep.’ (*Read John 21:15-17.*) Especially do the sheep need such care today, for the Devil has intensified his efforts to break the integrity of those dedicated to God. Satan takes advantage of fleshly weaknesses and uses the world in an attempt to lead Jehovah’s sheep into sinful activities. (1 John 2: 15-17; 5:19)

Inactive ones are particularly vulnerable and therefore need assistance in order to apply the admonition to ‘walk by spirit.’ (Gal. 5:16-21, 25) Helping such sheep calls for prayerful reliance on God, the guidance of his spirit, and skillful use of his Word.—Prov. 3:5, 6; Luke 11:13; Heb. 4:12.

⁷ A shepherd in ancient Israel used a long curved staff, or crook, to guide his flock. As the sheep entered or left the pen, they would ‘pass under the crook’ and could thus be counted by the shepherd. (Lev. 27:32; Mic. 2: 12; 7:14) A Christian shepherd likewise needs to know and keep track of the flock of God under his care. (Compare Proverbs 27:23.) Therefore, shepherding is one of the important matters discussed by the body of elders. This includes making arrangements to help sheep who have strayed. Jehovah himself said that he would search for his sheep and give them the care they needed. (Ezek. 34:11) So God is pleased when elders take similar steps in an effort to help sheep who have strayed to return to the flock.

⁸ When a fellow believer is physically sick, the visit of a shepherd of God’s flock can be a source of joy and encouragement. The same can be the case when a spiritually ailing sheep is given personal attention. Elders may read scriptures, review an article, discuss meeting highlights, pray with the inactive one, and so forth. They can point out that members of the congregation would be delighted to see him come back to congregation meetings. (2 Cor. 1:3-7; Jas. 5:13-15) A visit, a telephone call, or a letter can mean so much! Giving personal help to a sheep missing from the flock can also increase the joy of the compassionate Christian shepherd.

4. Elders need to have what attitude toward God’s flock?

5. Why do God’s sheep especially need the care of shepherds today?

6. How important is it for elders to shepherd sheep-like ones in their care?

7. In what ways can elders give the sheep personal attention?



Christian shepherds lovingly endeavor to help those who have strayed from God's flock

A Cooperative Effort

⁹ We live in busy and critical times, so it is possible that we might not notice that a fellow believer is drifting away from the congregation. (Heb. 2:1) Yet, Jehovah's sheep are precious in his sight. Every one of them has value, as does each member, or part, of the human body. Hence, all of us need to show concern for our brothers and truly care for one another. (1 Cor. 12:25) Do you have such an attitude?

¹⁰ Although the elders take the lead in searching for and helping sheep who have strayed, concern for missing fellow believers is not limited to Christian overseers. Others can cooperate with these shepherds. We can and should offer encouragement and spiritual aid to our brothers and sisters who need help to return to the flock. How may such assistance be given?

¹¹ In some cases, the elders may arrange for

^{9, 10.} Why would you say that concern for a sheep who has strayed is not limited to the elders?

^{11, 12.} How might you be privileged to assist one who needs some spiritual assistance?

experienced Kingdom publishers to conduct a personal Bible study with inactive ones who express a desire to be given assistance. The purpose of such efforts is to rekindle in such ones "the love [they] had at first." (Rev. 2:1, 4) These fellow believers can be built up and strengthened spiritually by considering material they missed while they were absent from the congregation.

¹² If the elders invite you to study with a fellow believer needing some spiritual assistance, pray that Jehovah direct and bless your efforts.

Indeed, "roll your works upon Jehovah himself and your plans will be firmly established." (Prov. 16:3) Meditate on Bible texts and faith-strengthening points that you can use in discussions with those needing spiritual help. Reflect on the apostle Paul's excellent example. (*Read Romans 1:11, 12.*) Paul longed to see Christians in Rome in order to impart some spiritual gift to them so that they might be made firm. He also looked forward to an interchange of encouragement. Should we not have that spirit when we seek to help sheep who have strayed from the flock of God?

¹³ During your discussions, you might ask, "How did you learn the truth?" Reminisce about past joys, encouraging the inactive one to speak about delightful experiences he has had at the meetings, in the preaching work, and at conventions. Comment on the happy times you may have had together in Jehovah's service. Speak about your joy in drawing close to Jehovah. (Jas. 4:8) Express your gratitude for the way that God provides

^{13.} What might you discuss with an inactive one?

for us as his people—especially by giving us comfort and hope in our tribulations.—Rom. 15:4; 2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

¹⁴ Quite likely, it will be beneficial to remind the inactive one of some of the blessings he once enjoyed as a result of close association with the congregation. For instance, there was the blessing of growing in knowledge of God's Word and purposes. (Prov. 4:18) When he 'walked by spirit,' it was no doubt easier for him to resist temptations to sin. (Gal. 5:22-26) In turn, a clean conscience enabled him to approach Jehovah in prayer and to enjoy 'the peace of God that excels all thought and that guards our hearts and mental powers.' (Phil. 4:6, 7) Keep such points in mind, show sincere interest, and by all means lovingly encourage your spiritual brother or sister to return to the flock.—*Read Philippians 2:4.*

¹⁵ Suppose you are an elder making a shepherding call. You might encourage an inactive married couple to reflect on the time when they first learned the truth from God's Word. How wonderful, reasonable, satisfying, and spiritually liberating the truth was! (John 8:32) How their hearts swelled with gratitude for what they were learning about Jehovah, his love, and his splendid purposes! (Compare Luke 24:32.) Remind them of the close relationship with Jehovah and the wonderful privilege of prayer enjoyed by dedicated Christians. Earnestly encourage inactive ones to respond again to "the glorious good news of the happy God," Jehovah. —1 Tim. 1:11.

Continue to Show Them Love

¹⁶ Do the foregoing suggestions really work? Yes. For instance, one young person

14, 15. It may be helpful to remind inactive ones of what blessings they once enjoyed?

16. Cite an example to show that efforts to provide spiritual help really are effective.

who started as a Kingdom publisher when he was 12 years old became inactive at the age of 15. He later became active, however, and has been in the full-time service for over 30 years. His spiritual recovery was largely due to the assistance given him by a Christian elder. How much that spiritual help was appreciated!

¹⁷ It is love that motivates Christians to assist inactive ones to return to the congregation. Regarding his followers, Jesus said: "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:34, 35) Yes, love is an identifying mark of true Christians. Should not that love be expressed for baptized Christians who may have become inactive? It certainly should! But providing needed help may call for the exercise of various godly qualities.

¹⁸ If you are to help someone who has strayed from the flock of God, what qualities might you need to display? Besides love, you may need to show compassion, kindness, mildness, and long-suffering. Depending on the circumstances, you may also need to

17, 18. What qualities will help you to assist someone who has strayed from the flock of God?

How Would You Answer?

- What responsibility do Christian shepherds have with respect to sheeplike ones who have strayed from the flock?
- How may you be able to help those who are not now associating with the congregation?
- What qualities can help you to assist those who have strayed from the flock?

be forgiving. Paul wrote: “Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering. Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also. But, besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union.”—Col. 3:12-14.

¹⁹ The next study article in this issue will consider reasons why some stray from God’s

19. Why is it worthwhile to make the effort to help sheeplike ones return to the Christian fold?

flock. It will also show how those returning can expect to be received. As you study that article and reflect on this one, be assured that any effort you make with the hope of helping sheeplike ones return to the Christian fold is worthwhile. In the present system of things, many people spend an entire lifetime trying to amass wealth, but just one life is worth much more than all the money in the world. Jesus emphasized this in his illustration of the lost sheep. (Matt. 18:12-14) May you bear that point in mind as you make an earnest and urgent effort to help Jehovah’s dear sheeplike ones who have strayed to return to the flock.

HELP THEM RETURN WITHOUT DELAY!

“Whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life.”—JOHN 6:68.

JESUS CHRIST was once abandoned by many disciples who rejected one of his teachings. “You do not want to go also, do you?” he asked his apostles. Peter replied: “Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life.” (John 6:51-69) There was nowhere else to go. Judaism had no “sayings of everlasting life” then, and such sayings certainly cannot be found today in Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. For any who have strayed from God’s flock but who want to please Jehovah, “it is high time to awake” and return to the fold.—Rom. 13:11, King James Version.

² Jehovah demonstrated concern for the

1. What did Peter say when many disciples abandoned Jesus?
2. What should be kept in mind regarding confidential or judicial matters?

lost sheep of Israel. (*Read Ezekiel 34:15, 16.*) Similarly, Christian elders have a desire and a duty to help a sheeplike one who has strayed from the flock. If they assign a publisher to study with an inactive person desiring help, what should be done if the conductor learns that the individual has committed a serious sin? Instead of giving counsel about any judicial or confidential matter, the publisher should suggest that he speak to the elders. If he fails to do so, the publisher himself should inform the elders.—Lev. 5:1; Gal. 6:1.

³ In the preceding article, reference was made to Jesus’ illustration about a man who had 100 sheep. When one was missing from the fold, he left the 99 and searched for the lost sheep. How that man rejoiced when

3. How did the man with 100 sheep react when a lost one was found?

he found it! (Luke 15:4-7) We have similar joy upon the return of one of God's sheep who has been missing from the flock. Motivated by love, elders and other members of the congregation have probably visited the inactive one. They too want to see the person come back to the fold and enjoy God's support, protection, and blessing. (Deut. 33:27; Ps. 91:14; Prov. 10:22) If they have an opportunity to be helpful in this regard, what can they do?

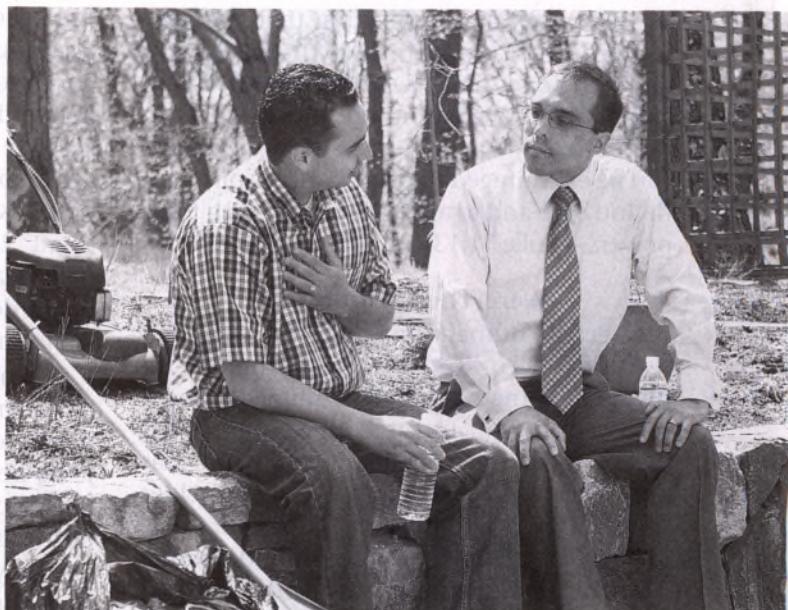
⁴ Perhaps they can encourage a person to return to the congregation by kindly showing him that Jehovah loves His sheep and requires only things that we can do. These include studying the Scriptures, attending Christian meetings, and preaching the good news of the Kingdom. It may be appropriate to read Galatians 6:2, 5 and mention that Christians can help to bear the burdens of one another, but "each one will carry his own load" of spiritual responsibility. No one else can be faithful to God for us.

Have "Anxieties of Life" Taken a Toll?

⁵ To discern how to help inactive fellow believers, elders and other mature publishers need to listen carefully as such individuals make heartfelt expressions. Suppose you are an elder visiting a married couple who are absent from the congregation because the "anxieties of life" have taken a toll. (Luke 21:34) Financial problems or increased family responsibilities may have caused them to slip

4. What can be discerned from Galatians 6:2, 5?

5, 6. (a) Why is it important that we listen carefully to the expressions of inactive fellow believers? (b) How may you be able to help inactive ones to see that not associating with God's people has been detrimental to them?



Listen carefully as an inactive fellow believer expresses himself

into spiritual inactivity. They may feel a need for relief, but you might point out that isolation is not the answer. (*Read Proverbs 18:1*) You might tactfully ask them: "Are you happier since you stopped attending meetings? Is your family life better? Is the joy of Jehovah still your stronghold?"—Neh. 8:10.

⁶ Reflecting on such questions may help the inactive ones to see that because of their lack of association with the congregation, their spirituality and happiness have diminished. (Matt. 5:3; Heb. 10:24, 25) It may be possible to help them realize that failure to preach the good news has resulted in the loss of joy. (Matt. 28:19, 20) So, then, what would be the wise course for them to take?

⁷ Jesus said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life . . . Keep awake, then, all

7. What can we encourage those who have strayed from the flock to do?

the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur." (Luke 21:34-36) Those who have strayed from the flock but who want to enjoy the happiness they once knew can be encouraged to pray for holy spirit and divine help and to act in harmony with their prayers.—Luke 11:13.

Were They Stumbled?

⁸ Because humans are imperfect, personality clashes occur, and this may stumble an individual. Some have been stumbled when a respected person in the congregation acted in an ungodly manner. If an inactive one has been affected in such a way, the visiting elder might point out that Jehovah does not cause anyone to stumble. So why should anyone sever his or her relationship with God and His people? Instead, should one not keep on serving God, confident that "the Judge of all the earth" knows what took place and will handle matters in the right way? (Gen. 18:25; Col. 3:23-25) If a person literally stumbled and fell, he would not deliberately remain in that position without even trying to get up.

⁹ In an effort to be of spiritual help, an elder might mention that with the passing of time, some find that what stumbled them no longer seems very important. In fact, the stumbling block may not exist any longer. If a person is stumbled because he has received discipline, prayerful meditation may cause him to conclude that he himself was at least partially in the wrong and should not have allowed the discipline to stumble him.—Ps. 119:165; Heb. 12:5-13.

Was It a Problem With a Teaching?

¹⁰ Some may have left God's flock because

8, 9. How might an elder reason with one who was stumbled?

10, 11. What reasoning may be effective in trying to help one who had a different understanding of some Bible teaching?

they did not agree with some Scriptural teaching. The Israelites freed from Egyptian bondage "forgot [God's] works" on their behalf and "did not wait for his counsel." (Ps. 106:13) It may be helpful to remind an inactive one that "the faithful and discreet slave" is dispensing excellent spiritual food. (Matt. 24:45) That is how the person originally learned the truth. So why should he not be determined to walk in the truth again? —2 John 4.

¹¹ When endeavoring to help those who have strayed from God's flock, the elder might refer to the disciples who abandoned Jesus because of rejecting one of his teachings. (John 6:53, 66) By cutting off association with Christ and his faithful followers, they lost their spirituality and their joy. Have those who stopped associating with the Christian congregation found another place where there is rich spiritual food? No, for there is none!

Was Improper Conduct Involved?

¹² Some individuals stop preaching and attending meetings because they have committed a serious sin. They may feel that if they confess their wrongdoing to the elders, they will be disfellowshipped. But they will not be expelled from the congregation if they have discontinued the unscriptural practice and are genuinely repentant. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) Instead, they will be welcomed back, and the elders will give them the spiritual help they need.

¹³ If you are a mature publisher who has been assigned to help an inactive person, what should you do if he tells you that he has engaged in serious misconduct? As noted earlier, rather than involve yourself further in the situation, recommend that he ap-

12, 13. If someone who has strayed from the flock admits that he has committed serious sin, how may it be possible to help him?



Reflecting on Jesus' illustration of the prodigal son may move some to return to the flock

proach the elders. If he does not wish to do so, you will be showing your concern for Jehovah's name and the spiritual welfare of the congregation by acting in harmony with divine direction respecting such matters. (*Read Leviticus 5:1.*) The elders will know how to assist anyone desiring to return and live in accord with God's will. Loving discipline may be required. (*Heb. 12:7-11*) If the person acknowledges that he has sinned against God, has ceased to engage in wrongdoing, and is truly repentant, the elders will help him, and he can receive Jehovah's forgiveness.—*Isa. 1:18; 55:7; Jas. 5:13-16.*

A Son's Return Brings Joy

¹⁴ When seeking to assist a sheep who has strayed, the one assigned to help might refer to Jesus' illustration recorded at Luke 15:11-

14. In your own words, relate Jesus' illustration regarding the prodigal son.

24. In that parable, a young man squanders his inheritance on loose living. He eventually comes to abhor the debauched life he has been leading. His stomach is empty, he is homesick, and he has made up his mind—he is going home! When

he is still far off, his father sees him, runs and falls upon his son's neck, tenderly kisses him, and is filled with joy. Reflecting on this illustration may motivate one who has drifted away to return to the fold. Since this system of things will soon be destroyed, he should 'come home' without delay.

¹⁵ Most who drift away from the congregation are not exactly like the prodigal son. With some, drifting takes place gradually, just as a boat that is adrift slowly floats farther from land. Others become so weighed down with anxieties that they lose sight of spiritual things. Still others allow themselves to be stumbled by someone associated with the congregation, or they leave because they do not agree with a certain Scriptural teaching. A few become involved in unscriptural conduct. However, the points presented in connection with each of these matters may help you to assist those who have left the fold for these or other reasons to return before it is too late.

"Welcome Home, Son!"

¹⁶ One Christian elder says: "Our local body of elders is very interested in calling on those who are inactive. I thought about a brother I had studied with and helped to come to a knowledge of the truth. He had been inactive for about 25 years and was

15. Why do some drift away from the congregation?

16-18. (a) How did one elder help a brother who had been inactive for years? (b) Why had this brother become inactive, how was he helped, and how was he received by the congregation?

going through a very difficult situation, so I explained how applying the spiritual principles from the Bible could help him. After some time, he began coming to the Kingdom Hall and agreed to have a personal Bible study to help strengthen his resolve to come back to the flock."

¹⁷ Why did the brother become inactive? He admits: "I started giving more attention to worldly matters than to spiritual things. Then I stopped studying, engaging in the ministry, and attending meetings. The next thing I knew, I was no longer a part of the Christian congregation. But I was helped to return by the personal and sincere interest the elder displayed." This brother's problems began to subside after he accepted a personal Bible study. He says, "I realized that what was missing in my life was the love and guidance of Jehovah and his organization."

¹⁸ How was this brother received in the congregation? He says: "I feel like the prodigal son spoken of by Jesus Christ. In fact, one of our elderly sisters who was there 30 years ago and is still going strong said to me, 'Welcome home, Son!' That really touched my heart. I was truly home. And I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the love, warmth, patience, and interest shown to me by that elder and the entire congregation. Their love for Jehovah and neighbor truly helped me to return to the flock."

How Would You Answer?

- How might you help a Christian who stumbled and became inactive?
- What reasoning might help someone who left God's flock because of a personal view regarding a teaching?
- How may it be possible to help someone who is hesitant about returning to the congregation?

Urge Them to Take Action Today!

¹⁹ We are living in the last days, and the end of the present system of things is imminent. Therefore, encourage inactive ones to attend Christian meetings. Urge them to start attending immediately. Point out that Satan is trying to destroy their relationship with God and make them think that relief from life's burdens can come by abandoning true worship. You can assure them that only by being Jesus' faithful followers can they enjoy true refreshment.—*Read Matthew 11:28-30.*

²⁰ Remind inactive ones that God expects us to do what we can. When Lazarus' sister Mary was criticized for anointing Jesus with expensive perfumed oil shortly before his death, he said: "Let her alone. . . . She did what she could." (Mark 14:6-8) Jesus praised the needy widow who made a very small contribution at the temple. She also did what she could. (Luke 21:1-4) Most of us *can* attend Christian meetings and share in the Kingdom-preaching work. With Jehovah's help, many of those now inactive will be able to do the same things.

²¹ If a sheeplike one who has strayed from the flock fears facing his brothers again, you might remind him of the rejoicing that occurred when the prodigal son came home. Those returning to the congregation are a cause of similar joy. Encourage them to act now to oppose the Devil and draw close to God.—Jas. 4:7, 8.

²² A joyful welcome awaits those returning to Jehovah. (Lam. 3:40) Their past experiences in God's service undoubtedly brought them great joy. Untold future blessings await those who return to the flock without delay!

19, 20. How can you encourage inactive ones to return to the flock without delay, and how can you show them that God does not expect too much of us?

21, 22. Of what can you assure those who return to Jehovah?

“Pursue the Things Making for Peace”

A NEWLY paved road appears solid, impervious to damage. Over time, however, cracks and potholes may develop. Restoration is necessary to ensure safety and to preserve the road.

In a similar way, our relationships with others may occasionally become strained and may even crack. The apostle Paul acknowledged that there were differences in viewpoint among Christians in Rome. He counseled fellow Christians: “Let us pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another.” (Rom. 14:13, 19) Why is it necessary to “pursue the things making for peace”? How can we courageously and effectively pursue peace?

Why Pursue Peace?

If untreated, small cracks in the pavement can grow into dangerous potholes. Leaving personal differences unresolved can likewise be disastrous. The apostle John wrote: “If anyone makes the

statement: ‘I love God,’ and yet is hating his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot be loving God, whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20) An unresolved personal difference could eventually cause a Christian to hate his brother.

Jesus Christ showed that our worship is unacceptable to Jehovah if we have not made peace with others. Jesus instructed his disciples: “If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift.” (Matt. 5:23, 24) Yes, a primary reason for us to pursue peace is that we want to please Jehovah God.*

A situation in the congregation in Philippi highlights another reason to pursue peace. An unspecified problem existing between two Christian sisters, Euodia and Syntyche, evidently threatened the peace of an entire congregation. (Phil. 4:2, 3) Unresolved

* Regarding Jesus’ counsel recorded at Matthew 18:15-17, see *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1999, pages 17-22.

Euodia and Syntyche needed to pursue peace



personal differences can quickly become public. A desire to preserve the love and unity of the congregation moves us to pursue peace with fellow believers.

"Happy are the peacemakers," said Jesus. (Matt. 5:9, ftn.) Pursuing peace brings joyful satisfaction. Furthermore, peace promotes good health, for "a calm heart is the life of the fleshly organism." (Prov. 14:30) On the other hand, harboring resentment may increase our risk of becoming physically ill.

Although most Christians agree that pursuing peace is necessary, you may wonder how to resolve a personal difference. Let us examine Scriptural principles that can guide us.

Calm Discussion Restores Peace

Minor cracks in the pavement can often be repaired by covering over the damaged area. Is it possible for us to forgive and cover over the minor failings of our brothers? Likely, this approach will work for most personal differences, for the apostle Peter wrote that "love covers a multitude of sins."—1 Pet. 4:8.

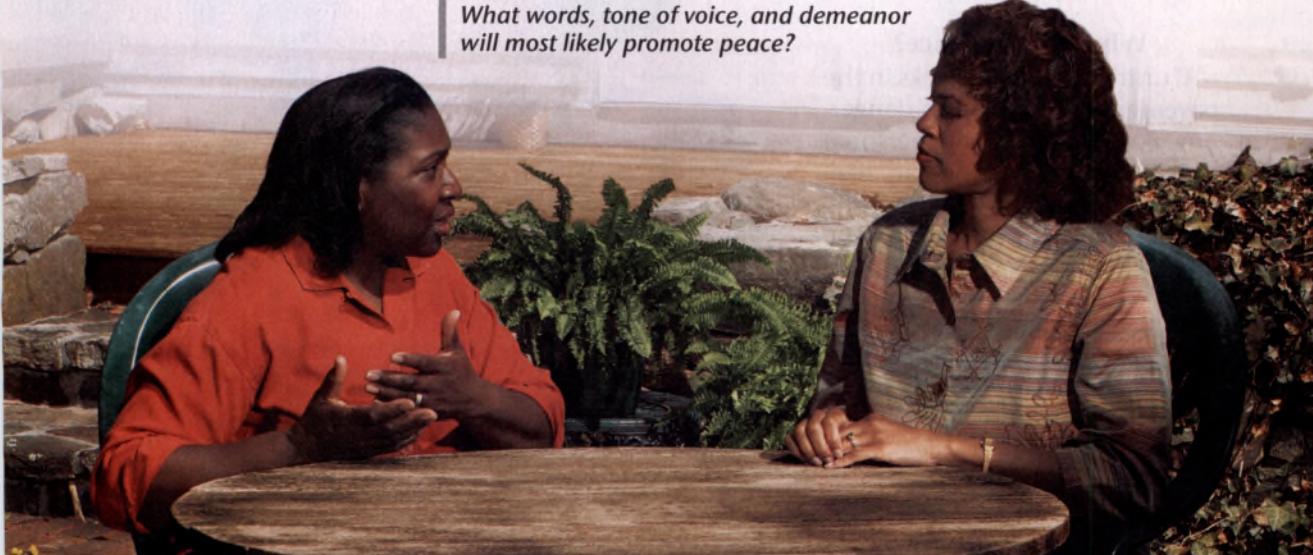
At times, however, a problem seems to be so serious that we cannot simply dismiss it. Consider what happened to the Israelites soon after they took possession of the Promised Land. Before "the sons of Reuben and

the sons of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh" moved across the Jordan River, they erected "an altar great in conspicuousness." The other tribes of Israel believed that the altar was used for idolatrous worship and could not just ignore the problem. They prepared for military action.—Josh. 22:9-12.

Some Israelites may have felt that there was already sufficient evidence of wrongdoing and that a sneak attack would result in fewer casualties. Rather than acting hastily, however, the tribes west of the Jordan sent delegates to discuss the problem with their brothers. They asked: "What is this act of unfaithfulness that you have perpetrated against the God of Israel in turning back today from following Jehovah?" Actually, the tribes that had built the altar were not acting unfaithfully. But how would they react to such an accusation? Would they lash out at their accusers or refuse to speak to them? The accused tribes replied mildly, clearly stating that their actions were really motivated by their desire to serve Jehovah. Their response preserved their relationship with God and saved lives. Calm discussion cleared up the matter and restored peace.—Josh. 22:13-34.

Before taking serious action, the other Israelites wisely discussed their problem with the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half

What words, tone of voice, and demeanor will most likely promote peace?



tribe of Manasseh. "Do not hurry yourself in your spirit to become offended," says God's Word, "for the taking of offense is what rests in the bosom of the stupid ones." (Eccl. 7:9) The Scriptural way of handling serious personal differences is through calm and frank discussion. Can we really expect Jehovah's blessing if we harbor resentment and fail to approach the person who we feel has wronged us?

On the other hand, what if a fellow Christian confronts us about a problem, perhaps even falsely accusing us? "An answer, when mild, turns away rage," says the Bible. (Prov. 15:1) The offending Israelite tribes mildly, yet clearly, explained their position, thus defusing what was undoubtedly an emotionally charged encounter with their brothers. Whether we take the initiative to approach our brother or he speaks to us about a problem, we might well ask ourselves, 'What words, tone of voice, and demeanor will most likely promote peace?'

Use the Tongue Wisely

Jehovah understands that we have a need to air our concerns. If we fail to resolve a personal difference, however, we will likely be tempted to confide in someone else. Harbored resentment can easily lead to critical speech. Concerning the improper use of the tongue, Proverbs 11:11 states: "Because of the mouth of the wicked ones [a town] gets torn down." Similarly, unguarded speech about a fellow Christian can disturb the peace of a townlike congregation.

Pursuing peace, however, does not mean avoiding all talk about our brothers and sisters. The apostle Paul counseled fellow believers: "Never let evil talk pass your lips." But he added: "Say only the good things men need to hear, things that will really help them. . . . Be kind to one another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving." (Eph. 4:29-

32, *The New American Bible*) If you were approached by a brother who was offended by your speech or conduct, would it not be easier to apologize and make peace if he had previously spoken positively about you to others? Accordingly, a pattern of using up-building speech when talking about fellow Christians will make it easier for us to restore peace when differences arise.—Luke 6:31.

Serve God "Shoulder to Shoulder"

Our sinful human tendency is to withdraw from those who have offended us, isolating ourselves. But such a course is unwise. (Prov. 18:1) As a united people who call upon Jehovah's name, we are determined "to serve him shoulder to shoulder."—Zeph. 3:9.

Improper speech or conduct of others should never cause us to weaken in our zeal for pure worship. Just days before Jesus' sacrifice replaced offerings at the temple and shortly after Jesus had roundly condemned the scribes, he noticed a poor widow contribute "all the means of living she had" into a temple treasury chest. Did Jesus try to stop her? On the contrary, he spoke well of her loyal support of Jehovah's congregation at that time. (Luke 21:1-4) The unrighteous acts of others did not free her of her obligation to support the worship of Jehovah.

Although we may feel that a Christian brother or sister has acted improperly, even unjustly, how will we react? Will we allow this to affect our whole-souled service to Jehovah? Or will we courageously act to settle any personal differences in order to preserve the precious peace of God's congregation today?

"If possible," the Scriptures counsel us, "as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men." (Rom. 12:18) May we be resolved to do so and thus remain securely on the road to life.

Jehovah's Word Is Alive

Highlights From the Letters of James and of Peter

NEARLY 30 years after Pentecost of 33 C.E., the disciple James—a half brother of Jesus—writes a letter to “the twelve tribes” of spiritual Israel. (Jas. 1:1) His objective: to exhort them to be strong in faith and to show endurance when facing trials. He also provides counsel to correct disturbing conditions that have developed in the congregations.

Just prior to Roman Emperor Nero’s campaign of persecution in 64 C.E., the apostle Peter writes his first letter addressed to Christians, encouraging them to stand firm in the faith. In his second letter, penned soon after the first, Peter encourages his fellow believers to pay attention to God’s word and warns them about the coming of Jehovah’s day. Indeed, we can benefit from paying attention to the messages of the letters of James and of Peter.—Heb. 4:12.

GOD GIVES WISDOM TO THOSE “ASKING IN FAITH” (Jas. 1:1–5:20)

“Happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial,” writes James, “because on becoming approved he will receive the crown of life.” To those who “keep on asking in faith,” Jehovah grants wisdom needed to endure trials.—Jas. 1:5–8, 12.

Faith and wisdom are also needed by those who “become teachers” in the congregation. After identifying the tongue as “a little member” capable of ‘spotting up the whole body,’ James warns of worldly tendencies that can damage one’s relationship with God. He also

outlines the steps anyone spiritually sick should take in order to recover.—Jas. 3:1, 5, 6; 5:14, 15.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

2:13—In what way does ‘mercy exult triumphantly over judgment’? When it comes to rendering an account for ourselves to God, he takes into consideration the mercy we have shown toward others and forgives us on the basis of the ransom sacrifice of his Son. (Rom. 14:12) Is this not one reason to make mercy a dominant quality in our lives?

4:5—What scripture is James quoting here? James is not quoting any specific verse. However, these divinely inspired words are possibly based on the general thought behind such scriptures as Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Proverbs 21:10; and Galatians 5:17.

5:20—“He who turns a sinner back from the error of his way” will save whose soul from death? A Christian who turns a wrongdoer back from a sinful course saves the soul of the repentant person from spiritual death and perhaps from everlasting destruction. The individual helping the sinner in this way will also “cover a multitude of [that one’s] sins.”

Lessons for Us:

1:14, 15. Sin has its beginning in improper desire. Therefore, we should not nurture wrong desires by dwelling on them. Rather, we need to “continue considering” upbuilding things and filling our minds and hearts with them.—Phil. 4:8.

2:8, 9. “Showing favoritism” is contrary to “the kingly law” of love. Hence, true Christians do not show favoritism.

2:14-26. We are “saved through faith,” “not owing to works” of the Mosaic Law or of those performed as Christians. Our faith should be more than mere professed faith. (Eph. 2:8, 9; John 3:16) It should move us to godly action.

3:13-17. “The wisdom from above” surely is superior to “the earthly, animal, demonic” wisdom! We should ‘keep searching for godly wisdom as for hid treasures.’—Prov. 2:1-5.

3:18, footnotes. The seed of the Kingdom good news is to be “sown with peace by those who are making peace.” It is important that we be peacemakers and not arrogant, quarrelsome, or riotous.

'STAND SOLID IN THE FAITH' (1 Pet. 1:1-5:14)

Peter reminds his fellow believers of their “living hope” of an inheritance in heaven. “You are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,’ ” Peter tells them. After giving specific counsel on subjection, he exhorts all to be “like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind.”—1 Pet. 1:3, 4; 2:9; 3:8.

Since “the end of [the Jewish system of] things has drawn close,” Peter counsels the brothers to ‘be sound in mind and vigilant with a view to prayers.’ He tells them: “Keep your senses, be watchful. . . . Take your stand against [Satan], solid in the faith.”—1 Pet. 4:7; 5:8, 9.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

3:20-22—How does baptism save us? Baptism is a requirement for those seeking salvation. However, baptism itself does not save us. Salvation is actually “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The baptismal candidate must have faith that salvation is possible

only because Jesus died a sacrificial death, was resurrected, and “is at God’s right hand,” having authority over the living and the dead. Baptism founded on such faith is what corresponds to ‘eight souls being safely carried through the water.’

4:6—Who were “the dead” to whom “the good news was declared”? These were ones who were ‘dead in their trespasses and sins,’ or who were spiritually dead, before they heard the good news. (Eph. 2:1) After putting faith in the good news, though, they began to “live” spiritually.

Lessons for Us:

1:7. For our faith to have excelling value, it must be of proved, or tested, quality. Such strong faith does indeed ‘preserve alive the soul.’ (Heb. 10:39) We must not shrink back from tests of our faith.

1:10-12. Angels desired to peer into and understand the deep spiritual truths that God’s prophets of old times wrote concerning the anointed Christian congregation. However, these things became clear only when Jehovah began dealing with the congregation. (Eph. 3:10) Should we not follow the example of the angels and strive to search into “the deep things of God”?—1 Cor. 2:10.

2:21. In imitation of our Exemplar, Jesus Christ, we should be willing to suffer even to the point of death in order to uphold Jehovah’s sovereignty.

5:6, 7. When we throw our anxiety upon Jehovah, he helps us to keep giving true worship priority in our life instead of being unduly concerned about what the next day may bring.—Matt. 6:33, 34.

"JEHOVAH'S DAY WILL COME" (2 Pet. 1:1-3:18)

“Prophecy was at no time brought by man’s will,” writes Peter, “but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy

spirit." Paying attention to the prophetic word can protect us from "false teachers" and other corrupting individuals.—2 Pet. 1:21; 2:1-3.

"In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule," warns Peter. But "Jehovah's day will come as a thief." Peter closes his letter with sound advice to those 'awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of that day.'—2 Pet. 3:3, 10-12.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

1:19—Who is the "daystar," when does he rise, and how do we come to know that this has happened? The "daystar" is Jesus Christ in Kingdom power. (Rev. 22:16) In 1914, Jesus rose before all creation as the Messianic King, heralding the dawn of a new day. The transfiguration provided a visionary foreview of Jesus' glory and Kingdom power, underscoring the dependability of God's prophetic word. Paying attention to that word illuminates our hearts, and we are thus made aware that the Daystar has risen.

2:4—What is "Tartarus," and when were the rebellious angels thrown into it? Tartarus is a prisonlike condition to which only spirit creatures—not humans—are consigned. It is a state of dense mental darkness regarding God's bright purposes. Those in Tartarus have no hope for the future. God threw the disobedient angels into Tartarus in Noah's day, and they will remain in that abased condition until they are destroyed.

3:17—What did Peter mean by "advance knowledge"? Peter was referring to advance knowledge, or foreknowledge, of future events, given to him and other Bible writers by inspiration. Since this was not an infinite knowledge, having it did not result in the early Christians' knowing all the details about future events. They came to know only the general outline of what could be expected.

Lessons for Us:

1:2, 5-7. In addition to helping us increase in "accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus," our putting forth earnest effort to cultivate such qualities as faith, endurance, and godly devotion can "cause [us] to be neither inactive nor unfruitful" regarding that knowledge.—2 Pet. 1:8, ftn.

1:12-15. To remain "firmly set in the truth," we need constant reminders, such as those we receive through our congregation meetings, personal study, and Bible reading.

2:2. We should be careful that our conduct does not bring reproach on Jehovah and his organization.—Rom. 2:24.

2:4-9. In view of what he has done in the past, we can be certain that "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off."

2:10-13. While "glorious ones," that is, Christian elders, have faults and may err at times, we must not speak abusively of them.—Heb. 13:7, 17.

3:2-4, 12. Paying close attention to "the sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior" will help us to keep in focus the nearness of Jehovah's day.

3:11-14. As those "awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah," we must (1) 'be holy in conduct,' maintaining physical, mental, moral, and spiritual cleanliness; (2) abound with deeds that reflect "godly devotion," such as those in connection with the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work; (3) keep our conduct and personality "spotless," untainted by the world; (4) be "unblemished," doing all things with a pure motive; and (5) be "in peace"—at peace with God, with our Christian brothers, and with fellow humans.

MAINTAIN A SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF HEALTH CARE

"You must love Jehovah your God . . . with your whole mind and with your whole strength." —MARK 12:30.

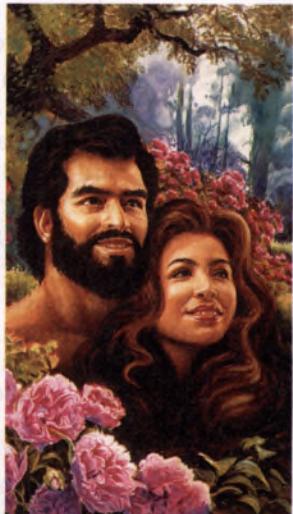
JEHOVAH GOD'S original purpose for human creatures did not include sickness and death. Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden, or "paradise of pleasure," "to cultivate it and to take care of it," not for a mere 70 or 80 years, but for eternity. (Gen. 2:8, 15, ftn.; Ps. 90:10) If that first human couple had remained faithful to Jehovah and had lovingly submitted to his sovereignty, they would never have experienced ill health, frailty, and death.

² Ecclesiastes chapter 12 paints a vivid picture of "the calamitous days" that accompany old age in the case of imperfect humans. (*Read Ecclesiastes 12:*

1-7.) White hair is compared to the blossom of "the almond tree." Legs are likened to "men of vital energy" that now bend and totter. Ladies who go to a window in search of light and find only darkness are a fitting illustration of dimming eyesight. Since some teeth are missing, "the grinding women have quit working because they have become few."

³ Shaky legs, failing eyesight, and toothless gums are certainly not what God orig-

1. What did God originally purpose for mankind?
2. 3. (a) How is old age depicted in the book of Ecclesiastes? (b) Who is responsible for Adamic death, and how will its effects be undone?



Mankind was not created to experience illness and old age

inally purposed for mankind. Moreover, death inherited from Adam is one of "the works of the Devil" that God's Son will undo by means of his Messianic Kingdom. The apostle John wrote: "For this purpose the Son of God was made manifest, namely, to break up the works of the Devil."—1 John 3:8.

Reasonable Concern Is Natural

⁴ At the present time, some of Jehovah's servants find themselves faced with the problems of ill health and aging that are common to sinful mankind. Reasonable concern about our health under such circumstances is natural and even beneficial. Do we not want to serve Jehovah 'with our whole strength'? (Mark 12:30) While seeking to remain reasonably healthy, however, we should be realistic and recognize that there is very little that we can do to slow down the aging process or avoid all sickness.

⁵ Many faithful servants of Jehovah have had to contend with health problems. Epaphroditus was one of these. (Phil. 2:

4. Why are Jehovah's servants reasonably concerned about their health, but of what are they aware?
5. What lesson can we draw from the way faithful servants of God have dealt with sickness?

25-27) The apostle Paul's loyal companion Timothy had frequent bouts of stomach trouble for which Paul recommended the use of "a little wine." (1 Tim. 5:23) Paul himself had to deal with "a thorn in the flesh," perhaps an eye affliction or some other physical ailment for which there was no medical cure at that time. (2 Cor. 12:7; Gal. 4:15; 6:11) Regarding his "thorn in the flesh," Paul made fervent pleas to Jehovah. (*Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10.*) God did not miraculously relieve Paul of the "thorn in the flesh." Instead, God strengthened him to endure it. Jehovah's power thus became manifest in Paul's weakness. Could this case contain a lesson for us?

Avoid Excessive Concern Over Health Care

⁶ As you know, Jehovah's Witnesses accept medical help and various forms of treatment. Our journal *Awake!* often contains articles on health matters. And although we do not endorse any particular treatment, we appreciate the help and cooperation of health-care professionals. Of course, we are aware that perfect health is not yet attainable. Therefore, we know that it is wise to avoid letting our health become an obsession or a constant concern. Our attitude should differ from that of those who have "no hope," who think that this life is all there is and who will resort to any therapy in an attempt to cure their ailments. (Eph. 2:2, 12) We are determined not to forfeit Jehovah's approval in an effort to save our present life, for we are convinced that if we remain faithful to God, we will "get a firm hold on the real life," everlasting life in his promised new system of things. —1 Tim. 6:12, 19; 2 Pet. 3:13.

⁷ We avoid excessive concern over our health for another reason. Being inordinately concerned about our health could lead to our

6, 7. Why should we avoid excessive concern over our health?

becoming self-centered. Paul warned against this danger when he urged the Philippians to be "keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just [their] own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others." (Phil. 2:4) It is proper to take reasonable care of ourselves, but the keen interest we show in our brothers and in the people to whom we bring "this good news of the kingdom" will prevent us from being preoccupied with our physical well-being.—Matt. 24:14.

⁸ The danger exists that a Christian might let health concerns push Kingdom interests into the background. Obsession with health care could also lead us to try to impose on others our personal opinions regarding the value of some diet, therapy, or food supplement. In this regard, consider the principle embodied in Paul's words: "Make sure of the more important things, so that you may be flawless and not be stumbling others up to the day of Christ."—Phil. 1:10.

What Is More Important?

⁹ If we are making sure of the more important things, we will be having an active share in the work of spiritual healing. It is accomplished by preaching and teaching the Word of God. This joyful activity benefits us and those whom we teach. (Prov. 17:22; 1 Tim. 4:15, 16) The *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines occasionally include articles regarding our spiritual brothers and sisters who have serious illnesses. These accounts sometimes explain how those individuals cope with their problems or even temporarily take their minds off them by seeking to help others come to know Jehovah and his wonderful promises.*

* A list of some such articles appears in the box on page 17 of *The Watchtower* of September 1, 2003.

8. What might undue concern over our health lead us to do?
9. What is one of the more important things that we should not neglect, and why?

Despite health problems, Jehovah's people find joy in the ministry

¹⁰ When faced with a health problem, each adult Christian must "carry his own load" of responsibility in choosing treatment. (Gal. 6:5) But we should remember that our choice of therapy matters to Jehovah. Just as respect for Bible principles moves us to "abstain . . . from blood," so our deep regard for God's Word should impel us to avoid resorting to therapies that could harm us spiritually or affect our relationship with Jehovah. (Acts 15:20) Some diagnostic and therapeutic procedures border on the use of the uncanny. Jehovah disapproved of apostate Israelites who resorted to "uncanny power," or spiritistic practices. He declared: "Stop bringing in any more valueless grain offerings. Incense—it is something detestable to me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of a convention—I cannot put up with the use of uncanny power along with the solemn assembly." (Isa. 1:13) A period of illness surely is no time to do something that might hinder our prayers and jeopardize our relationship with God.—Lam. 3:44.

"Soundness of Mind" Essential

¹¹ When we are sick, we cannot expect Jehovah to heal us miraculously, but we can pray for wisdom in choosing treatment. We should seek to be guided in our choice by Scriptural principles and good sense. When the case is serious, it may be wise to consult more than one specialist if that is possible, in line with the thought expressed at Proverbs 15:22, which states: "There is a frustrating of

10. Why does our choice of therapies matter?

11, 12. How does "soundness of mind" come into play when we are selecting health care?



plans where there is no confidential talk, but in the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment." The apostle Paul urged fellow believers to "live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things."—Titus 2:12.

¹² Many individuals find themselves in a situation similar to that of a sick woman in Jesus' day. At Mark 5:25, 26, we read: "There was a woman subject to a flow of blood twelve years, and she had been put to many pains by many physicians and had spent all her resources and had not been benefited but, rather, had got worse." Jesus healed that woman and dealt with her compassionately. (Mark 5:27-34) In desperation, some Christians have been tempted to choose diagnostic or therapeutic methods that go against the principles of pure worship.

¹³ Satan will resort to any means to distract us from true worship. Just as he uses sexual immorality and materialism to cause some to stumble, he tries to breach the integrity of others by means of questionable treatments

13, 14. (a) How could Satan use our choice of health treatments to breach our integrity? (b) Why should we keep away from anything that even borders on the occult?

that amount to the use of occult powers and spiritism. We pray to Jehovah for deliverance from "the wicked one" and from "every sort of lawlessness." So we should not play into Satan's hands by exposing ourselves to anything that borders on spiritism and the occult.—Matt. 6:13; Titus 2:14.

¹⁴ Jehovah forbade the Israelites to practice divination and magic. (Deut. 18:10-12) Paul lists the "practice of spiritism" among "the works of the flesh." (Gal. 5:19, 20) Furthermore, "those practicing spiritism" will have no part in Jehovah's new system of things. (Rev. 21:8) Clearly, then, anything that smacks of spiritism is detestable to Jehovah.

"Let Your Reasonableness Become Known"

¹⁵ In view of the foregoing, if we have doubts about some diagnostic or therapeutic procedure, we would be wise to reject it. Of course, the mere fact that we personally are unable to explain how a health technique works does not in itself mean that it involves some form of spiritism. Keeping a Scriptural

15, 16. Why do we need wisdom in choosing health care, and what wise counsel did the first-century governing body give?

By Way of Review

- Who is responsible for sickness, and who will relieve us of the effects of sin?
- Although it is normal for us to be concerned about our health, what should we avoid?
- Why does our choice of therapy matter to Jehovah?
- With regard to our health, how can we benefit from adhering to Bible principles?

view of health care requires divine wisdom and calls for good judgment on our part. In Proverbs chapter 3, we find this admonition: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight. . . . Safeguard practical wisdom and thinking ability, and they will prove to be life to your soul."—Prov. 3:5, 6, 21, 22.

¹⁶ While endeavoring to stay as healthy as possible, then, we must be careful not to lose God's favor as we try to cope with sickness or the aging process. In health care, as in other matters, we should 'let our reasonableness become known to all men' by living in accord with Bible principles. (Phil. 4:5) In a vitally important letter, the first-century governing body instructed Christians to abstain from idolatry, blood, and fornication. That letter included the assurance: "If you carefully keep yourselves from these things, you will prosper." (Acts 15:28, 29) In what way?

Reasonable Care With Perfect Health in View

¹⁷ Each of us does well to ask himself, 'Do I appreciate the extent to which I have personally prospered because of my strict observance of Bible principles regarding blood and fornication?' Think, too, of the benefits that have come to us as a result of our efforts to "cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit." (2 Cor. 7:1) By adhering to Bible standards regarding personal hygiene, we avoid many physical ailments. We prosper because of shunning the spiritually and physically defiling use of tobacco and illicit drugs. Consider also the health benefits that result from moderation in eating and drinking. (*Read Proverbs 23:20; Titus 2:2, 3.*) Although such factors as rest and exercise may

17. How have we benefited physically from our adherence to Bible principles?

contribute to our general well-being, we have especially prospered physically and spiritually because we have accepted Scriptural guidance.

¹⁸ Above all, we should take care of our spiritual health and strengthen our precious relationship with our heavenly Father, the Source of our "life now and that which is to come" in his promised new world. (1 Tim. 4:8; Ps. 36:9) In God's new world, full spiritual and physical healing will be brought about by means of forgiveness of sins on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, will guide us to "fountains of

18. What should be our main concern, and to the fulfillment of what prophecy regarding health can we look forward?

waters of life," and God will wipe out every tear from our eyes. (Rev. 7:14-17; 22:1, 2) Then, too, we will experience the fulfillment of this thrilling prophecy: "No resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isa. 33:24.

¹⁹ We are convinced that our deliverance is near, and we eagerly await the day when Jehovah will reverse the process of human sickness and death. In the meantime, we are assured that our loving Father will help us to endure the burden of our aches and pains because 'he cares for us.' (1 Pet. 5:7) Let us, therefore, take care of our health but always in accord with the clear guidelines contained in God's inspired Word!

19. While taking reasonable care of our health, of what can we be assured?

"OPPOSE THE DEVIL" AS JESUS DID

"Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you."—JAS. 4:7.

JESUS CHRIST knew that he would face opposition from the Devil. This fact was apparent from what God said to the serpent and thus to the wicked spirit rebel speaking through it: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman [the heavenly part of Jehovah's organization] and between your seed and her seed. He [Jesus Christ] will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Gen. 3:14, 15; Rev. 12:9) Jesus' being bruised in the heel meant that he would suffer only a temporary blow by being killed while on earth, for Jehovah would resurrect him to heavenly glory. But the bruising of

1. What opposition did Jesus know he would face on earth, and with what outcome?

the serpent in the head would mean that the Devil would receive a death blow from which he would never recover.—Read Acts 2:31, 32; Hebrews 2:14.

² Jehovah was confident that Jesus would successfully fulfill his assignment and oppose the Devil while on the earth. Why could Jehovah be so sure of this? Because he had created Jesus in heaven ages earlier, had observed him, and knew that this "master worker" and "firstborn of all creation" was obedient and faithful. (Prov. 8:22-31; Col. 1:15) So when Jesus was sent to the earth and the Devil was allowed to test him to the point

2. Why was Jehovah confident that Jesus would successfully resist the Devil?

of death, God was confident that His only-begotten Son would come off victorious.
—John 3:16.

Jehovah Preserves His Servants

³ Jesus referred to the Devil as “the ruler of this world” and warned His disciples that they would be persecuted, even as he had been. (John 12:31; 15:20) The world, lying in the power of Satan the Devil, hates true Christians because they serve Jehovah and are preachers of righteousness. (Matt. 24:9; 1 John 5:19) The Devil particularly targets the remnant of anointed ones who will eventually rule with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom. Satan also targets the many Witnesses of Jehovah who have the hope of living forever on a paradise earth. God’s Word warns us: “Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone.”—1 Pet. 5:8.

⁴ As an organization enjoying the support of Jehovah God, we successfully oppose the Devil. Consider these facts: In the past 100 years, some of the most ferocious dictatorships in history have tried to stamp Jehovah’s Witnesses out of existence. But the number of Witnesses continues to grow and has now reached nearly 7,000,000 in over 100,000 congregations throughout the world. The cruel dictatorships that persecuted Jehovah’s people are the ones that have been stamped out of existence!

⁵ Speaking to the congregation of ancient Israel as his “woman,” God promised: “Any weapon whatever that will be formed against you will have no success, and any tongue at all that will rise up against you in the judgment you will condemn. This is the heredi-

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3. What is the Devil’s attitude toward Jehovah’s servants?
 4. What proves that God’s people have successfully opposed the Devil in our time?
 5. How has Isaiah 54:17 proved true in the case of Jehovah’s servants?

tary possession of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness is from me.” (Isa. 54:11, 17) That promise has proved reliable in the case of Jehovah’s people throughout the earth during these “last days.” (2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13) We continue to oppose the Devil, and no weapon that he tries to use to wipe out God’s people is successful, for Jehovah is on our side.—Ps. 118:6, 7.

⁶ At the rapidly approaching end of this entire wicked system of things, all aspects of Satan’s rule will be crushed out of existence. Writing under divine inspiration, the prophet Daniel foretold: “In the days of those kings [existing in our day] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom [in heaven] that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms [now existing], and it itself will stand to times indefinite.” (Dan. 2:44) When that happens, both satanic rule and rule by imperfect humans will disappear. Every aspect of the Devil’s system of things will be gone forever, and God’s Kingdom will rule unopposed over all the earth.—*Read 2 Peter 3:7, 13.*

⁷ There is no doubt that Jehovah’s organization will be preserved and will prosper spiritually. (*Read Psalm 125:1, 2.*) How about us? The Bible tells us that we can succeed in opposing the Devil, even as Jesus did. Indeed, the prophecy that Christ gave through the apostle John shows that despite satanic opposition, “a great crowd” of those having an earthly hope will survive this system’s end. According to the Scriptures, they cry out: “Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb [Jesus Christ].” (Rev. 7:9-14) Anointed ones are spo-

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6. What does Daniel’s prophecy tell us about the future of the Devil’s rulership?
 7. How do we know that Jehovah’s servants as individuals can successfully oppose the Devil?

ken of as conquering Satan, and their companions, the "other sheep," also successfully oppose him. (John 10:16; Rev. 12:10, 11) But this requires diligent effort and earnest prayer for 'deliverance from the wicked one.' —Matt. 6:13.

The Perfect Example in Opposing the Devil

⁸ The Devil tried to break the integrity of Jesus. In the wilderness, Satan used temptations in an effort to get Jesus to compromise His obedience to Jehovah. However, Jesus set a perfect example in opposing Satan. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus likely had a strong desire to eat. "If you are a son of God," said Satan, "tell these stones to become loaves of bread." But Jesus refused to make use of his God-given power for personal benefit. Instead, Jesus said: "It is written, 'Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth.'" —Matt. 4:1-4; Deut. 8:3.

⁹ Today, the Devil seeks to exploit the natural physical desires of Jehovah's servants. We must therefore be resolute in resisting il-

8. What was the first recorded temptation that the Devil used against Jesus in the wilderness, and how did Christ respond?

9. Why must we resist the Devil's attempts to exploit our natural physical desires?

licit sexual temptations, which are especially common in this immoral world. God's Word emphatically states: "What! Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men . . . will inherit God's kingdom." (1 Cor. 6:9, 10) Clearly, then, people who live immoral lives and refuse to change will not be allowed to live in God's new world.

¹⁰ Concerning one of the temptations Jesus experienced in the wilderness, the Scriptures state: "The Devil took him along into the holy city, and he stationed him upon the battlement of the temple and said to him: 'If you are a son of God, hurl yourself down; for it is written, "He will give his angels a charge concerning you, and they will carry you on their hands, that you may at no time strike your foot against a stone.'"'" (Matt. 4:5, 6) Supposedly, this would result in a spectacular display of Jesus' Messiahship. In reality, though, it would have been an improper, arrogant act that would not have had God's approval and support. Once more, Jesus maintained his integrity to Jehovah and responded by quoting

10. According to Matthew 4:5, 6, what was another temptation that Satan used in an attempt to break Jesus' integrity?

Friendship with the world puts us at enmity with God



a scripture. He said: "Again it is written, 'You must not put Jehovah your God to the test.'" —Matt. 4:7; Deut. 6:16.

¹¹ Satan may tempt us to seek glory in various ways. He may try to induce us to imitate worldly fads in dress and grooming or to engage in questionable entertainment. But if we were to ignore Bible counsel and imitate the world, could we expect the angels to shield us from the bad effects of such a course? Although King David repented of his sins involving Bath-sheba, he was not shielded from the consequences of his actions. (2 Sam. 12:9-12) Let us not put Jehovah to the test in improper ways, perhaps by cultivating friendship with the world.—*Read James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17.*

¹² Still another temptation that the Devil used in the wilderness involved an offer to give Jesus political power. Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said: "All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me." (Matt. 4:8, 9) What an unscrupulous attempt to get the worship belonging to Jehovah and to induce Jesus to prove unfaithful to God! By meditating on the desire to be worshipped, that once loyal angel had become the sinful, covetous, and grossly evil tempter Satan the Devil. (Jas. 1:14, 15) In stark contrast, however, Jesus was determined to remain faithful to his heavenly Father and therefore declared: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is *to him alone* you must render sacred service.'" Thus Jesus again opposed the Devil in clear and definite terms. God's Son wanted no part of Satan's world and would never worship that wicked one! —Matt. 4:10; Deut. 6:13; 10:20.

11. How may Satan tempt us, and what could be the result?

12. What was the temptation mentioned at Matthew 4:8, 9, and how did God's Son respond?

"Oppose the Devil, and He Will Flee From You"

¹³ By showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, the Devil was offering him unprecedented human power. Satan hoped that what Jesus saw would appeal to him and convince him that he could become the earth's most powerful political leader. Today, the Devil does not offer us kingdoms, but he does attempt to corrupt our hearts through our eyes, ears, and minds.

¹⁴ The Devil is in control of this world. Hence, he controls its media. It is not surprising, therefore, that the world's viewing, listening, and reading material is saturated with immorality and violence. This world's advertising elements try to build in us a desire for a flood of consumer goods that we do not need. By such means, the Devil constantly tempts us with materialistic attractions that can appeal to our eyes, ears, and minds. But when we refuse to view, listen to, and read Scripturally unacceptable material, we are in effect saying: "Go away, Satan!" We thus imitate Jesus in being firm and decisive in our rejection of Satan's unclean world. The fact that we are no part of Satan's world is also seen in how we courageously identify ourselves as Jehovah's Witnesses and Christ's followers at work, at school, in the neighborhood, and among our relatives. —*Read Mark 8:38.*

¹⁵ After the Devil's third unsuccessful attempt to get Jesus to compromise His integrity to God, "the Devil left him." (Matt. 4:11) However, Satan did not intend to stop tempting Jesus, for we are told: "So the Devil, having concluded all the temptation [in the wilderness], retired from him until another

13, 14. (a) By showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, what was the Devil offering him? (b) How does Satan attempt to corrupt us?

15. Why does opposing Satan mean being continually alert?



*Jesus rejected
Satan's offer of all
worldly kingdoms*

convenient time.” (Luke 4:13) When we succeed in opposing the Devil, we should thank Jehovah. But we should also seek God’s continued help, for the Devil will return to tempt us at another time convenient for him—and not necessarily when we may be expecting a temptation. Hence, we must remain alert at all times, ready to persevere in rendering sacred service to Jehovah regardless of the tests we must face.

¹⁶ To help us in our efforts to oppose the Devil, we should pray for and will receive the most powerful force in the universe—God’s holy spirit. It will enable us to do things that would be impossible for us to do in our own strength. Jesus assured his followers of the availability of God’s spirit by saying: “If you, although being [imperfect and thus comparatively] wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!” (Luke 11:13) Let us continue praying to Jehovah for his holy spirit. With this most powerful force backing us up in our determination to oppose the Devil, we will be able to come off victorious. In addition to regular and fervent prayer, we need to put on the complete suit of spiritual armor from

16. Jehovah gives us what powerful force, and why should we pray for it?

God in order ‘to stand firm against the machinations, or crafty acts, of the Devil.’—Eph. 6: 11-18, ftn.

¹⁷ Something else helped Jesus to oppose the Devil, and it can help us too. The Bible states: “For the joy that was set before [Jesus] he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) We can have similar joy by upholding Jehovah’s sovereignty, honoring his holy name, and keeping the reward of everlasting life before us. What joy we will experience when Satan and all his works are obliterated forever and ‘the meek ones themselves possess the earth and find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace’! (Ps. 37:11) Therefore, keep on opposing the Devil, as Jesus did.—*Read James 4:7, 8.*

17. What joy helped Jesus resist the Devil?

How Would You Answer?

- What proof is there that Jehovah preserves his people?
- How did Jesus set an example in opposing Satan?
- In what ways can you oppose the Devil?

"The Song of the Sea"

A Manuscript That Bridges a Gap

ON May 22, 2007, a Hebrew scroll fragment dating from the seventh or eighth century C.E. went on display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. This is a manuscript of Exodus 13:19–16:1. It includes what is known as "the Song of the Sea"—the victory song that the Israelites sang after their miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea. Why is the unveiling of this scroll fragment noteworthy?

The answer has to do with the date of the manuscript. The Dead Sea Scrolls were written between the third century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. Prior to their discovery some 60 years ago, the earliest Hebrew manuscript was the Aleppo Codex, dating back to 930 C.E. With the exception of a few fragments, no other Hebrew manuscripts have been found that date to the intervening period of several hundred years.

"The Song of the Sea manuscript," says James S. Snyder, director of the Israel Museum, "bridges the gap in the period of history between the Dead Sea Scrolls . . . and the Aleppo Codex." According to him, this manuscript along with other ancient Biblical texts "provides a unique example of textual continuity."

The scroll fragment is believed to be one of the many manuscripts discovered in the late 19th century in a synagogue in Cairo, Egypt. However, a private collector of Hebrew manuscripts was not aware of its significance until he consulted a professional in the late 1970's. The fragment was carbon-dated at that time and then archived until it went on display in the Israel Museum.

Commenting on the relevance of the scroll fragment, Adolfo Roitman, head of the Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, and curator of the Dead Sea Scrolls, states: "The Song of the Sea manuscript demonstrates the tremendous fidelity with which the Masoretic version of the Bible was transmitted over the centuries. It is incredible how the distinctive prosody of the Song of Sea is the same today as it was in the 7th-8th centuries."

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and Jehovah is primarily responsible for its preservation. Moreover, the Scriptures were meticulously copied by scribes. Therefore, the Bible text we use today is unquestionably reliable.

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Courtesy of Israel Museum, Jerusalem

