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SONG 130

Be Forgiving

PREVIEW

Today, we live in a world filled with proud, selfish people. We need to be careful that their attitude does not rub off on us. This article will consider three areas in which we should not think more of ourselves than is necessary.

Do Not Think More of Yourself Than Is Necessary

“I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think, but to think so as to have a sound mind.”—ROM. 12:3.

WE HUMBLY submit to Jehovah’s standards, realizing that Jehovah always knows what is best for us. (Eph. 4: 22-24) Humility moves us to put Jehovah’s will above our own and to consider others superior to us. As a result, we enjoy good relationships with Jehovah and fellow believers.—**Read Philippians 2:3.**

² If we are not careful, though, we could be influenced by people in Satan’s system who are proud and selfish.* Apparently, this was a danger to some in the first century C.E., for the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: “I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think, but to think so as to have a sound mind.” (Rom. 12:3) Paul acknowledged that we need to think something of ourselves. However, humility will help us to keep a balanced view of ourselves. This article will consider three areas in which humility will help us avoid thinking too much of ourselves. Those areas are (1) our marriage, (2) our privileges of service, and (3) our use of social media.

* **EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED:** A **proud** person tends to think too much of himself and not enough of others. Thus, a proud person is **selfish**. On the other hand, humility helps an individual to be unselfish. **Humility** is defined as freedom from pride or arrogance, being lowly in mind.

1. According to Philippians 2:3, how does our having humility promote good relationships with others?
2. What did the apostle Paul acknowledge, and what will we consider in this article?

SHOW HUMILITY IN YOUR MARRIAGE

³ Jehovah created marriage to be a source of happiness for a husband and wife. No one is perfect, though, so conflicts are likely to happen. In fact, Paul wrote that those who marry can expect a measure of tribulation. (1 Cor. 7:28) Some find that they are constantly fighting with their spouse, and they may conclude that they were just not meant for each other. If they have been influenced by the world, they will be quick to think that divorce is the answer. They will feel that the most important thing is to be good to themselves.

⁴ We must avoid becoming dissatisfied with our marriage. We realize that the only Scriptural grounds for divorce is

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3. Why are conflicts likely to arise in marriage, and how do some react to those conflicts?
 4. What must we avoid?

sexual immorality. (Matt. 5:32) So when faced with the tribulation that Paul wrote about, we would not want to let pride cause us to begin wondering: ‘Is this marriage fulfilling my needs? Am I getting the love I deserve? Would I find greater happiness with another person?’ Notice the focus on **self** in those questions. The wisdom of the world would tell you to follow your heart and do what makes **you** happy, even if that means ending your marriage. Godly wisdom says you should “look out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Phil. 2:4) Jehovah wants you to preserve your marriage, not to end it. (Matt. 19:6) He wants you to think of him first, not yourself.

⁵ A husband and a wife should treat

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5. According to Ephesians 5:33, how should a husband and a wife treat each other?



Instead of being rivals, a humble couple will work together as a team
(See paragraph 6)

each other with love and respect. (**Read Ephesians 5:33.**) The Bible teaches us to focus on giving rather than on receiving. (Acts 20:35) What quality will help a married couple to show love and respect? The answer is humility. Husbands and wives who are humble will seek, not their own advantage, but “that of the other person.”—1 Cor. 10:24.

⁶ Humility has helped many Christian couples find greater happiness in their marriage. For example, a husband named Steven says: “If you are a team, you will work together, especially when there are problems. Instead of thinking ‘what is best for *me*?’ you will think ‘what is best for *us*?’” His wife, Stephanie, feels similarly. “Nobody wants to live with an opponent,” she says. “When a conflict arises, we identify the problem. We then pray, do research, and talk it out. We attack the problem, not each other.” Husbands and wives truly benefit when they do not think more of themselves than is necessary.

SERVE JEHOVAH WITH “ALL HUMILITY”

⁷ We view it as a privilege to serve Jehovah in any way we can. (Ps. 27:4; 84:10) If a brother is able to make himself available for a special privilege of service, that is commendable. In fact, the Bible states: “If a man is reaching out to be an overseer, he is desirous of a fine work.” (1 Tim. 3:1) However, when he receives an assignment, he should not think more of himself than is neces-

sary. (Luke 17:7-10) His goal should be to serve others humbly.—2 Cor. 12:15.

⁸ The Bible contains warning examples of people who thought too much of themselves. **Diotrephes** immodestly sought to have “the first place” in the congregation. (3 John 9) **Uzziah** proudly tried to perform a task that Jehovah had not assigned him to do. (2 Chron. 26:16-21) **Absalom** slyly tried to win the support of the public because he wanted to be king. (2 Sam. 15:2-6) As those Bible accounts clearly show, Jehovah is not pleased with people who seek their own glory. (Prov. 25:27) In time, pride and ambition lead only to disaster.—Prov. 16:18.

⁹ In contrast with those warning examples, consider **Jesus**, “who, although he was existing in God’s form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God.” (Phil. 2:6) Jesus, whose authority is second only to Jehovah’s, does not think more of himself than is necessary. He told his disciples: “The one who conducts himself as a lesser one among all of you is the one who is great.” (Luke 9:48) What a blessing it is to serve with pioneers, ministerial servants, elders, and circuit overseers, who imitate Jesus in displaying humility! Humble servants of Jehovah contribute to the loving spirit that identifies God’s organization.—John 13:35.

¹⁰ What if it seems that there are prob-

6. What do you learn from the comments made by Steven and Stephanie?

7. What attitude should a brother have when he receives a privilege of service?

8. What do we learn from the examples of Diotrephes, Uzziah, and Absalom?

9. What example did Jesus set?

10. What should you do if you feel that problems in the congregation are not being handled properly?



Those who are entrusted with responsibility should be known not only for their ability but also for their humility (See paragraph 11)

lems in the congregation and you feel that they are not being dealt with properly? Rather than complain, you can show humility by supporting those taking the lead. (Heb. 13:17) To help you do that, ask yourself: ‘Are the problems that I see really so serious that they need to be corrected? Is this the right time to correct them? Is it my place to correct them? In all honesty, am I really trying to promote unity, or am I trying to promote myself?’

¹¹ Jehovah values humility more than ability and unity more than efficiency. Therefore, do your best to serve Jehovah with humility. In doing so, you will promote unity in the congregation.

11. According to Ephesians 4:2, 3, what are the results when we serve Jehovah with humility?

(Read Ephesians 4:2, 3.) Be active in the ministry. Look for ways to serve others by doing kind things for them. Be hospitable to all, including those who do not have positions of responsibility. (Matt. 6:1-4; Luke 14:12-14) As you humbly work with the congregation, others will notice not only your ability but also your humility.

SHOW HUMILITY WHEN USING SOCIAL MEDIA

¹² Jehovah made us to enjoy pleasant association with friends and family members. (Ps. 133:1) Jesus had good friends. (John 15:15) The Bible describes the benefits of having true friends. (Prov. 17:17; 18:24) And it tells us that it is

12. Does the Bible encourage us to have friends? Explain.



If you post material online, does it give the impression that you are bragging or that you are humble? (See paragraph 15)

not good for us to isolate ourselves. (Prov. 18:1) Many feel that social media is a way to have a lot of friends and to avoid feeling isolated. However, we need to be cautious about using this method of communication.

¹³ Studies have found that people who spend a lot of time scrolling through social media postings might actually end up feeling lonely and depressed. Why? One possible reason is that people often post on social media photos that depict the highlights of their lives, showing selected images of themselves, their friends, and the exciting places they have been. A person who views those images might conclude that, by comparison, his or her own life is ordinary—even dull. “I started feeling discontent when I saw others having all this fun on the weekends and I was at home bored,” admits a 19-year-old Christian sister.

13. Why are some who use social media prone to loneliness and depression?

¹⁴ Of course, social media can be used for a good purpose—for example, to keep in touch with family and friends. Have you observed, though, that some of the material that people post on social media is designed to promote the people themselves? “Look at me” seems to be the message they want to convey. Some even post rude and obscene comments on their own photos or about the photos that others post. This too is contrary to the humility and fellow feeling that Christians are encouraged to cultivate. —**Read 1 Peter 3:8.**

¹⁵ If you use social media, ask yourself: ‘Might the comments, photos, or videos that I post give others the impression that I am bragging? Could I make others feel jealous?’ The Bible says: “Everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy

14. How can the Bible’s counsel at 1 Peter 3:8 help us with regard to the use of social media?

15. How can the Bible help us to avoid promoting ourselves?

display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world.” (1 John 2:16) One Bible version renders the phrase “showy display of one's means of life” as “wanting to appear important.” Christians do not feel the need for promoting themselves. They follow the Bible's admonition: “Let us not become egotistical, stirring up competition with one another, envying one another.” (Gal. 5:26) Humility will help us avoid getting caught up in the world's spirit of self-promotion.

“THINK SO AS TO HAVE A SOUND MIND”

¹⁶ We need to cultivate humility because those who are proud do not have “a sound mind.” (Rom. 12:3) Proud people are contentious and egotistical. Their thinking and actions often cause them to hurt themselves and others. Unless they change their way of thinking, their minds will be blinded and corrupted by Satan. (2 Cor. 4:4; 11:3) A humble person, on the other hand, has a sound mind. He has a balanced and reasonable view of himself, recognizing that in

16. Why should we avoid pride?

many ways others are superior to him. (Phil. 2:3) And he knows that “God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones.” (1 Pet. 5:5) Those with a sound mind do not want to have Jehovah as an opponent.

¹⁷ To remain humble, we must apply the Bible's counsel to “strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe [ourselves] with the new personality.” That takes hard work. We need to study Jesus' example and try to imitate him as closely as possible. (Col. 3:9, 10; 1 Pet. 2:21) But it is worth the effort. As we cultivate humility, our family life will improve, we will promote unity in the congregation, and we will know how to avoid using social media in a negative way. Above all, we will have Jehovah's blessing and favor.

17. What must we do to remain humble?

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 5: An elder who has the ability to speak at a convention and to oversee other brothers also appreciates the privilege of taking the lead in the ministry and cleaning the Kingdom Hall.

HOW CAN YOU SHOW HUMILITY . . .

- in your marriage?
- in carrying out your privileges of service?
- in your use of social media?

SONG 56

Make the Truth Your Own

PREVIEW

This article will help us to appreciate the truthful teachings of God's Word. It will also discuss ways in which we can strengthen our conviction that what we believe in is the truth.

Be Convinced That You Have the Truth

“Continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe.”—2 TIM. 3:14.

“HOW did you find the truth?” “Were you raised in the truth?” “How long have you been in the truth?” You have likely been asked such questions—or maybe you have asked them of others. What do we mean by the term “the truth”? Generally, we use it to describe our beliefs, our way of worship, and our way of life. People who are “in the truth” know what the Bible teaches, and they live according to its principles. As a result, they are set free from religious falsehood and they enjoy the best life possible for imperfect humans.—John 8:32.

² What initially attracted you to the truth? Maybe it was the good conduct of Jehovah's people. (1 Pet. 2:12) Or perhaps it was the love they showed. Many took note of it at the first meeting they attended, and more than anything that was said from the platform, that love made a lasting impression on them. This is not surprising because Jesus said that his disciples would be identified by their love for one another. (**Read John 13:34, 35.**) But more is needed if we are to have strong faith.

³ Our faith has to be based on more than just the Christlike love of God's people. Why? Suppose a fellow believer—even an elder or a pioneer—commits a serious sin. Or what if a brother or a sister hurts you in some way? Or perhaps someone becomes an apostate, assert-

1. What do we mean by the term “the truth”?
2. According to John 13:34, 35, what might initially attract a person to the truth?
3. What may happen if our faith in God is based only on the Christlike love shown by our brothers and sisters?

ing that we do not have the truth. If such things happen, will you be stumbled and stop serving Jehovah? The lesson is this: If you were to build your faith in God purely on the way that other people act instead of on your relationship with Jehovah himself, your faith would not be solid. In your house of faith, you should use not only such soft materials as feelings and emotions but also hard facts and solid logic. You need to prove to yourself that the Bible contains the truth about Jehovah.—Rom. 12:2.

⁴ Jesus said that some would accept the truth “with joy,” but their faith would wither when tested. (**Read Matthew 13:3-6, 20, 21.**) Perhaps they did not realize that following Jesus would involve challenges and hardship. (Matt. 16:24) Or maybe they thought that being a Christian meant living a trouble-free life—one with only blessings, no challenges. But in this imperfect world, there will be challenges. Circumstances can change, causing our joy to diminish for a time.—Ps. 6:6; Eccl. 9:11.

⁵ The vast majority of our brothers and sisters prove that they are convinced that they have the truth. How? Their conviction does not waver even if a fellow believer hurts them or gets involved in unchristian conduct. (Ps. 119:165) With each test, their faith grows stronger, not weaker. (Jas. 1:2-4) How can you build that type of strong faith?

4. According to Matthew 13:3-6, 20, 21, how are some affected by tests of their faith?

5. How are the majority of our brothers and sisters proving that they are convinced that they have the truth?

GAIN “THE ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD”

⁶ The first-century disciples built their faith on their knowledge of the Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus Christ, that is, “the truth of the good news.” (Gal. 2:5) This truth consists of the whole body of Christian teachings, including the facts about Jesus’ ransom sacrifice and his resurrection. The apostle Paul was convinced that these teachings were true. Why? Because he used the Scriptures to prove “by references that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead.” (Acts 17:2, 3) The first-century disciples accepted those teachings and relied on the holy spirit to help them understand God’s Word. They proved to themselves that these teachings were based on the Scriptures. (Acts 17:11, 12; Heb. 5:14) They did not build their faith on feelings and emotions alone, and they did not serve Jehovah simply because they felt good when they associated with fellow believers. Instead, their faith was built on “the accurate knowledge of God.”—Col. 1:9, 10.

⁷ The truths of God’s Word remain constant. (Ps. 119:160) For example, they do not change if a fellow believer offends us or commits a serious sin. And they do not change when we face adversity. So we need to be thoroughly familiar with Bible teachings and convinced that they are truthful. Our firm faith built on Bible truths will steady us in times of test, just as an anchor can steady a boat during a turbulent storm.

6. On what did the first-century disciples build their faith?

7. What will our faith in Bible truths do for us?

How can you strengthen your conviction that you have the truth?

BE “PERSUADED TO BELIEVE”

⁸ Timothy was convinced that he had the truth. How did he arrive at that conclusion? (**Read 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.**) His mother and his grandmother introduced him to the teachings of “the holy writings.” But no doubt he himself also spent time and energy studying those writings. As a result, he was “persuaded to believe” that they contained the truth. Later, Timothy, his mother, and his grandmother came in contact with Christianity. Timothy was no doubt impressed by the love shown by Jesus’ followers, and he had a strong desire to associate with and care for his spiritual brothers and sisters. (Phil. 2:19, 20) However, his faith was built, not on his feelings for fellow humans, but on facts that drew him closer

8. As shown at 2 Timothy 3:14, 15, how did Timothy become convinced that he had the truth?

to Jehovah. You too must logically reason on what you have learned about Jehovah from reading the Bible.

⁹ To start with, you need to prove to yourself at least three basic truths. First, you need to be convinced that Jehovah God is the Creator of all things. (Ex. 3:14, 15; Heb. 3:4; Rev. 4:11) Second, you must prove to yourself that the Bible is God’s inspired message to mankind. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) And third, you need to confirm that Jehovah has an organized group of people who are worshipping him under Christ’s headship and that Jehovah’s Witnesses are that group. (Isa. 43:10-12; John 14:6; Acts 15:14) Proving to yourself those basic truths does not require that you become a walking encyclopedia of Bible knowledge. Your goal should be to use your “power of reason” to strengthen your conviction that you have the truth.—Rom. 12:1.

9. What three basic truths do you need to prove to yourself?



Parents, help your children develop faith by teaching them “the deep things of God” (See paragraphs 12-13)

BE PREPARED TO CONVINCE OTHERS

¹⁰ Once you have established the three basic truths regarding God, the Bible, and God's people, you need to be able to use the Scriptures to prove these truths to others. Why? Because as Christians, we have a responsibility to teach the truths that we learn to those who will listen to us.* (1 Tim. 4:16) And as we try to convince others about Bible truths, we strengthen our own conviction about those truths.

¹¹ When the apostle Paul taught people, he would “persuade them about Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets.” (Acts 28:23) How can we imitate Paul when teaching others the truth? We must do more than recite facts. We must help our Bible students to reason on the Scriptures as they draw close to Jehovah. We want them to accept the truth, not because they admire us, but because they have proved to themselves that what they are learning is the truth about our loving God.

¹² Parents, no doubt you want your children to remain in the truth. You may feel that if they have good associates in the congregation, they will make good spiritual progress. However, if your chil-

* To help you reason with others on basic Bible teachings, see the series “A Conversation With a Neighbor,” which appeared in *The Watchtower* from 2010 to 2015. Topics include “Is Jesus God?,” “When Did God’s Kingdom Begin Ruling?,” and “Does God Punish People in Hellfire?”

10. In addition to knowing the truth, what do we need to be able to do?

11. What example did the apostle Paul set as a teacher?

12-13. How can parents help their children to remain in the truth?

CAN YOU EXPLAIN THESE PROPHECIES?

- **Revelation 11:3, 7-12.** “Two witnesses” prophesy for 1,260 days, are killed, and then are raised up.—*w14 11/15 30.*
- **Matthew 13:36-43.** The wheat and the weeds.—*w13 7/15 9-14.*
- **1 Thessalonians 5:3.** The proclamation of “peace and security.”—*w19.10 8-9.*
- **Ezekiel 38:2, 10-20.** The attack of “Gog of the land of Magog.”—*w19.09 11-12; rr 240.*

dren are to be convinced that they have the truth, they need something more than wholesome friends. They need to have a personal relationship with God and to be convinced of the truthfulness of what the Bible teaches.

¹³ If parents are to teach their children the truth about God, they must set the example by being good students of the Bible. They must take time to meditate on what they learn. Then they will be able to teach their children to do the same. They need to teach their children to use our Bible study tools, just as they teach one of their Bible students. In doing so, they will help their children to appreciate Jehovah and the channel he uses to dispense spiritual food—“the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45-47) Parents, do not settle for teaching your children only basic Bible truths. Help them develop strong faith by teaching them about “the deep

things of God” to an extent that is appropriate to their age and ability.—1 Cor. 2:10.

STUDY BIBLE PROPHECY

¹⁴ Bible prophecy is an important part of God’s Word that helps us build strong faith in Jehovah. What prophecies have strengthened your faith? You might point to the prophecies about “the last days.” (2 Tim. 3:1-5; Matt. 24:3, 7) But what other fulfilled prophecies can strengthen your conviction? For example, can you explain how the prophecies recorded in Daniel chapter 2 or in Daniel chapter 11 have been and are being fulfilled?* When you have faith that is solidly based on the Bible, that faith will become unbreakable. Consider the example of our brothers who suffered

* For a discussion of these prophecies, see the June 15, 2012, and the May 2020 issues of *The Watchtower*.

14. Why should we study Bible prophecy? (See also the box “Can You Explain These Prophecies?”)

severe persecution in Germany during World War II. While they did not completely understand Bible prophecies relating to the last days, they had strong faith in God’s Word.

¹⁵ Under the rule of Nazi Germany, thousands of our brothers and sisters were sent to concentration camps. Hitler and SS Chief Heinrich Himmler hated Jehovah’s Witnesses. According to one sister, Himmler said to a group of our sisters in one concentration camp: “Your Jehovah may reign in heaven, but here upon earth it is we who rule! We’ll show you who will endure longer, you or we!” What helped Jehovah’s people remain faithful?

¹⁶ Those Bible Students knew that God’s Kingdom had begun ruling in 1914. They were not surprised at the intense opposition they faced. However, Jehovah’s people were convinced that no hu-

15-17. How did studying the Bible strengthen our brothers who were persecuted by the Nazis?

Our study of the Bible, including its prophecies, can give us confidence during times of trial (See paragraphs 15-17)



man government could stop God's purpose from succeeding. Hitler could not wipe out true worship or set up a government that would shove aside God's Kingdom. Our brothers were convinced that one way or another, Hitler's rule would end.

¹⁷ The conviction of those brothers and sisters was not misplaced. Before long, the Nazi regime collapsed, and Heinrich Himmler—the man who said “here upon earth it is we who rule”—was running for his life. While doing so, he encountered Brother Lübke, a former prisoner whom he recognized. Thoroughly defeated, Himmler asked Brother Lübke: “Well, Bible Student, what happens now?” Brother Lübke explained to Himmler that Jehovah's Witnesses knew all along that the Nazi regime would fail and that they would be delivered. Himmler—the man who previously had so much to say about Jehovah's Witnesses—was finally speechless. Shortly thereafter, he committed suicide. The point? Our study of the Bible, including its prophecies, can build unbreakable faith in God and give us confidence during times of trial.—2 Pet. 1:19-21.

¹⁸ Each one of us should show love—the identifying mark of true Christians. But we also need “accurate knowledge and full discernment.” (Phil. 1:9) Otherwise, we could be influenced “by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men,” including apostates. (Eph. 4:14) When many disciples in the first century C.E. stopped following Jesus, the apostle Peter expressed his firm conviction that Jesus had “sayings of everlasting life.” (**Read John 6:67, 68.**) Even though Peter at that time did not understand all the details of those sayings, he remained loyal because he had discerned the truth about Christ. You too can strengthen your conviction in what the Bible teaches. If you do, your faith will stand the test of time, and you will help to build strong faith in others.—2 John 1, 2.

18. As indicated at John 6:67, 68, why do we need the “accurate knowledge and full discernment” that Paul wrote of?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 10: During family worship, parents study with their children Bible prophecies about the great tribulation. **Page 12:** During the great tribulation, the same family will not be surprised at what takes place.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- Why should our faith be based on more than mere feelings and emotions for fellow humans?
- How can you strengthen your conviction that you have the truth?
- How can Bible teachers help their students understand the truth?

SONG 38

He Will Make You Strong

PREVIEW

In this article, we will examine the apostle Paul's example. We will see that if we are humble, Jehovah will give us the strength we need to endure ridicule and to overcome our weaknesses.

“When I Am Weak, Then I Am Powerful”

“I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in times of need, in persecutions and difficulties, for Christ.”—2 COR. 12:10.

THE apostle Paul openly acknowledged that he at times felt weak. He admitted that his body was “wasting away,” that he had to struggle to do what was right, and that Jehovah did not always answer his prayers in the way he hoped He would. (2 Cor. 4:16; 12:7-9; Rom. 7:21-23) Paul also acknowledged that his opposers viewed him as weak.* But he did not allow the negative viewpoint of others or his own weaknesses to make him feel worthless. —2 Cor. 10:10-12, 17, 18.

² Paul learned a valuable lesson—a person can be strong even when he feels that he is weak. (**Read 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.**) Jehovah told Paul that His power is “made perfect in weakness,” meaning that Jehovah’s power would make up for the strength that Paul lacked. First, let us see why we should not be troubled when our opponents insult us.

“TAKE PLEASURE . . . IN INSULTS”

³ None of us like to be insulted. However, if our enemies do insult us and we are overly concerned with what they say, we can become discouraged. (Prov. 24:

* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** We might feel **weak** for a number of reasons—because we are imperfect, we are poor, we are sick, or we have little formal education. In addition, our enemies try to make us feel weak by verbally or physically attacking us.

1. What did the apostle Paul openly acknowledge?
2. According to 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10, what valuable lesson did Paul learn?
3. Why can we take pleasure in insults?

10) How, then, should we view the insults of opposers? Like Paul, we can “take pleasure . . . in insults.” (2 Cor. 12:10) Why? Because insults and opposition are signals that we are genuine disciples of Jesus. (1 Pet. 4:14) Jesus said that his followers would be persecuted. (John 15:18-20) That proved true in the first century. Back then, those influenced by Greek culture viewed Christians as unintelligent and weak. And among the Jews, Christians were considered to be “uneducated and ordinary,” like the apostles Peter and John. (Acts 4:13) Christians seemed to be weak; they had no political influence or military power, and people viewed them as outcasts of society.

⁴ Did those early Christians allow the negative view of their opposers to stop them? No. The apostles Peter and John, for example, viewed it as an honor to be persecuted for following Jesus and sharing his teachings. (Acts 4:18-21; 5:27-29, 40-42) The disciples had no reason to feel ashamed. In the long run, those humble first-century Christians did more good for mankind than any of their opposers did. For example, the inspired books written by some of those Christians continue to give help and hope to millions of people. And the Kingdom they promoted not only is now in existence but will soon rule all of mankind. (Matt. 24:14) By comparison, the great political power that persecuted the Christians has collapsed into the ash heaps of history, whereas those loyal disciples are now kings in heaven. Their op-

4. How did the early Christians respond to the negative view that opposers had of them?

posers, however, are dead; and if they are ever resurrected, they will be subjects of the Kingdom that was promoted by the Christians whom they hated.—Rev. 5:10.

⁵ Today, as Jehovah’s people, we are sometimes looked down on and ridiculed as being unintelligent and weak. Why? Because we do not agree with the attitudes of those around us. We try to be humble, meek, and obedient. The world, on the other hand, admires the proud, the arrogant, and the rebellious. In addition, we do not get involved in politics, and we do not join the military forces of any country. We do not fit into the world’s mold, so we are considered to be inferior to others.—**Read John 15:19; Rom. 12:2.**

⁶ Despite what the world thinks of us, Jehovah is achieving extraordinary things with us. He is accomplishing the greatest preaching campaign in human history. His servants today produce the most widely translated and distributed journals on earth and use the Bible to help millions of people to improve their lives. All credit for these remarkable accomplishments goes to Jehovah, who uses a seemingly weak group of people to perform these powerful works. But what about us as individuals? Can Jehovah help us to be powerful? If so, what must we do to get his help? Let us now consider three specific things we can learn from the example set by the apostle Paul.

5. According to John 15:19, why are Jehovah’s people looked down on?

6. What is Jehovah achieving with his people?



Paul viewed the seeming advantages of the world as “a lot of garbage” compared with the privilege of following Christ (See paragraph 8)

DO NOT RELY ON YOUR OWN STRENGTH

⁷ One lesson we learn from Paul’s example is this: Do not rely on your own strength or abilities when serving Jehovah. From a human viewpoint, Paul had reason to be a proud, self-reliant man. He grew up in Tarsus, the capital city of a Roman province. Tarsus was prosperous and a famous seat of learning. Paul was well-educated—he was taught by one of the most respected Jewish leaders of his day, a man named Gamaliel. (Acts 5:34; 22:3) And at one point, Paul had some influence in the Jewish community. He said: “I was making greater progress in Judaism than many of my own age in my nation.” (Gal. 1:13, 14; Acts 26:4) But Paul did not rely on himself.

⁸ Paul gladly gave up the things that

7. What is one lesson that we learn from Paul’s example?

8. According to Philippians 3:8 and footnote, how did Paul view the things he gave up, and why did he take “pleasure in weaknesses”?

made him powerful by the world’s standards. In fact, he came to view the seeming advantages that he formerly had as “a lot of garbage.” (**Read Philippians 3:8 and footnote.**) Paul paid a price for becoming a follower of Christ. He was hated by his own nation. (Acts 23:12-14) And he was beaten and imprisoned by his fellow citizens, the Romans. (Acts 16:19-24, 37) In addition, Paul became painfully aware of his own limitations. (Rom. 7:21-25) But rather than allow his opponents or his own shortcomings to cripple him, he took “pleasure in weaknesses.” Why? Because it was when he was weak that he saw God’s power at work in his life.—2 Cor. 4:7; 12:10.

⁹ If we want to gain power from Jehovah, we must not think that physical strength, education, cultural background, or material wealth determine how valuable we are. These things are

9. How should we view any seeming disadvantages we have?

not what make us useful to Jehovah. In fact, not many of God's people are "wise in a fleshly way, not many powerful, not many of noble birth." Instead, Jehovah has chosen to use "the weak things of the world." (1 Cor. 1:26, 27) So do not view any supposed disadvantages as obstacles to serving Jehovah. Instead, view them as opportunities, a chance to see Jehovah's power working through you. For example, if you feel intimidated by those who try to make you doubt your beliefs, pray for Jehovah to give you boldness when defending your faith. (Eph. 6:19, 20) If you are struggling to cope with a chronic disability, ask Jehovah to give you the strength you need to stay as busy as you can in his service. Each time you see Jehovah help you, your faith grows and you become stronger.

LEARN FROM BIBLE EXAMPLES

¹⁰ Paul was an earnest student of the Scriptures. He learned a lot of facts, but he also learned from the examples of the people whose experiences are recorded in God's Word. When writing to Hebrew Christians, Paul asked them to think about the examples set by a long line of faithful servants of Jehovah. **(Read Hebrews 11:32-34.)** Consider just one of these servants, King David. He had to deal with opposition not only from his enemies but also from some who at one time were his friends. As we look at David's example, we will see what strength Paul may have drawn from meditating on David's life and how we can imitate Paul.

10. Why should we study the examples set by faithful Bible characters, such as those mentioned at Hebrews 11:32-34?

¹¹ David was viewed as weak by the physically powerful warrior Goliath. When Goliath saw David, he "sneered at him in contempt." After all, Goliath was bigger, better equipped, and better trained for war. David, on the other hand, was just an inexperienced boy who seemed to be poorly equipped for battle. But David turned what seemed to be a weakness into a strength. He relied on Jehovah for power, and he defeated his enemy.—1 Sam. 17:41-45, 50.

¹² David had to deal with another challenge that could have made him feel weak and powerless. David loyally served the one whom Jehovah had appointed as king of Israel, Saul. King Saul at first respected David. Later on, pride caused Saul to become jealous of David. Saul treated David badly, even trying to kill him.—1 Sam. 18:6-9, 29; 19:9-11.

¹³ Despite the unjust way that he was treated by King Saul, David continued to show respect for Jehovah's appointed king. (1 Sam. 24:6) David did not blame Jehovah for the bad things that Saul did. Instead, David relied on Jehovah to give him the strength he needed to endure this difficult trial.—Ps. 18:1, superscription.

¹⁴ The apostle Paul faced a situation similar to that of David. Paul's enemies were vastly more powerful than he was.

11. Why did David seem to be weak? (See cover picture.)

12. What other challenge did David have to cope with?

13. How did David respond to the unjust way he was treated by King Saul?

14. What situation did the apostle Paul face that was similar to that of David?

Be respectful and kind as you try to reason with those who challenge your Christian beliefs
(See paragraph 15)



Many influential leaders of his day hated him. Often, they had him beaten and thrown into jail. Like David, Paul was treated badly by people who should have been friends. Some in the Christian congregation even opposed him. (2 Cor. 12: 11; Phil. 3:18) But Paul conquered all who fought against him. How? He continued preaching despite opposition. He remained loyal to his brothers and sisters even when they disappointed him. And above all, he was faithful to God to the end of his life. (2 Tim. 4:8) He overcame great odds, not because he was physically strong, but because he relied on Jehovah.

¹⁵ Do you have to deal with insults or persecution from classmates, work associates, or non-Witness family members? Have you ever been treated badly by someone in the congregation? If so, remember the examples of David and Paul. You can keep “conquering

the evil with the good.” (Rom. 12:21) Your goal is, not to sink a stone into someone’s forehead, as David did, but to embed God’s Word in receptive minds and hearts. You can achieve that goal by relying on the Bible to answer people’s questions, by being respectful and kind to those who treat you badly, and by doing good to all, even your enemies. —Matt. 5:44; 1 Pet. 3:15-17.

ACCEPT HELP FROM OTHERS

¹⁶ Before the apostle Paul became a disciple of Christ, he was an insolent young man who persecuted Jesus’ followers. (Acts 7:58; 1 Tim. 1:13) Jesus himself stopped Paul, then known as Saul, from terrorizing the Christian congregation. Jesus spoke to Paul from heaven and struck him blind. To recover his sight, Paul was forced to seek help from the very people he had been persecuting. He humbly accepted assistance from a disciple named Ananias

15. What is our goal, and how can we achieve it?

16-17. What did Paul never forget?

who restored Paul's sight.—Acts 9:3-9, 17, 18.

¹⁷ Paul later became a prominent member of the Christian congregation, but he never forgot the lesson Jesus taught him on the road to Damascus. Paul remained humble, and he willingly accepted the help of his brothers and sisters. He acknowledged that they were “a strengthening aid” to him.—Col. 4:10, 11, ftn.

¹⁸ What can we learn from Paul? When we first began to associate with Jehovah's people, we may have been eager to accept help from others, realizing that we were spiritual infants and had a lot to learn. (1 Cor. 3:1, 2) But what about now? If we have been serving Jehovah for many years and have gained a lot of experience, we may not be as ready to accept help, especially if it is offered by someone who has not been in the truth as long as we have. However, Jehovah often uses our brothers and sisters to strength-

18. Why may we be reluctant to accept help from others?

en us. (Rom. 1:11, 12) We must recognize that fact if we are to gain the power that Jehovah supplies.

¹⁹ Paul accomplished some remarkable things after becoming a Christian. Why? Because he learned that success depends, not on a person's physical strength, education, wealth, or social background, but on his humility and reliance on Jehovah. May all of us imitate Paul (1) by relying on Jehovah, (2) by learning from Bible examples, and (3) by accepting help from fellow believers. Then, no matter how weak we may feel, Jehovah will make us powerful!

19. Why was Paul successful?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 16:** When Paul went preaching about Christ, he left behind the things that were part of his former life as a Pharisee. These could have included secular scrolls and a scripture-containing case. **Page 18:** Workmates try to pressure a brother to join in a birthday party for a coworker.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ■ In what sense can we “take pleasure . . . in insults”? | ■ Why should we not be overly concerned about the world's view of us? | ■ What are three things that we, like Paul, can do to gain power from Jehovah? |
|--|---|--|

SONG 54

“This Is the Way”

PREVIEW

We live in a world dominated by the father of the lie, Satan. So we face a constant struggle to walk in the truth. Christians living at the end of the first century C.E. had the same challenge. In order to help them and us, Jehovah inspired the apostle John to write three letters. The contents of those letters will help us identify the obstacles we face and learn how to overcome them.

Keep Walking in the Truth

“No greater joy do I have than this: that I should hear that my children go on walking in the truth.”—3 JOHN 4.

CAN you imagine how happy the apostle John felt when he heard that those whom he had helped to learn the truth were continuing to serve Jehovah faithfully? They faced many problems, and John was working hard to strengthen the faith of these loyal Christians whom he viewed as his spiritual children. Similarly, we feel happy when our children, whether natural or spiritual, dedicate themselves to Jehovah and persevere in serving him. —**Read 3 John 3, 4.**

² In 98 C.E., John was likely living in or near Ephesus. He may have moved there after being released from exile on the island of Patmos. About that time, Jehovah’s holy spirit moved him to write three letters. The purpose of those letters was to motivate loyal Christians to maintain their faith in Jesus and to keep on walking in the truth.

³ John was the last living apostle, and he was concerned about the effect that false teachers were having on the congregations.* (1 John 2:18, 19, 26) Those apostates claimed to know God, but they did not obey Jehovah’s commands. Let us consider the inspired counsel John gave. As we do, we will answer three questions: What does it mean to walk in the truth? What obstacles

* See the box “The Background to John’s Letters.”

1. As indicated at 3 John 3, 4, what makes us happy?
2. What was the purpose of the letters that John wrote?
3. What questions will we answer?

do we face? And how can we help one another to remain in the truth?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WALK IN THE TRUTH?

⁴ To walk in the truth, we need to know the truth found in God’s Word, the Bible. In addition, we must “observe [Jehovah’s] commandments,” that is, we need to obey them. (**Read 1 John 2:3-6; 2 John 4, 6.**) Jesus set the perfect example of obeying Jehovah. So one important way that we obey Jehovah is by following Jesus’ steps as closely as possible. —John 8:29; 1 Pet. 2:21.

⁵ To keep walking in the truth, we must be convinced that Jehovah is the God of truth, that everything he tells us in his Word, the Bible, is true. And we must also be convinced that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Many today doubt that Jesus has been anointed as King of God’s Kingdom. John warned that there were “many deceivers,” who could mislead those who were not prepared to defend the truth about Jehovah and Jesus. (2 John 7-11) John wrote: “Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” (1 John 2:22) The only way we can avoid being deceived is by studying God’s Word. Only if we do that will we come to know Jehovah and Jesus. (John 17:3) And only then will we be convinced that we have the truth.

WHAT OBSTACLES DO WE FACE?

⁶ All Christians must be on guard

4. According to 1 John 2:3-6 and 2 John 4, 6, what is involved in walking in the truth?

5. Of what must we be convinced?

6. What is one obstacle that young Christians face?

The Background to John’s Letters

When the apostle John wrote his letters, he was concerned about false teachers who had come into the congregations and were trying to mislead Christ’s followers. Both the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter had warned that this would happen. (Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Pet. 2:1-3) These false teachers may have been influenced by Greek philosophy. Some apparently claimed to have received a special, mystical knowledge from God.* But their teaching contradicted Jesus’ message and encouraged selfishness and a lack of love. So John calls these teachers antichrists, or those who teach against Christ. —1 John 2:18.

* See the article “The Antichrist Exposed” in the December 1, 2006, issue of *The Watchtower*.

against being misled by **human philosophy**. (1 John 2:26) Young Christians in particular need to beware of this trap. Alexia,* a 25-year-old French sister, says: “When I was younger, I was troubled by the world’s reasonings, such as the theory of evolution and human philosophy. At times, those teachings appealed to me. But I felt that I could not just listen to what I was being taught in school and not give Jehovah a chance

* Some names have been changed.



to speak.” Alexia studied the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* Within a few weeks, her doubts vanished. Alexia says: “I proved to myself that the Bible contains the truth. And I realized that living by its standards would give me joy and peace.”

⁷ All Christians, young and old, must resist the pressure to live a double life. John pointed out that we cannot be walking in the truth and at the same time be living an immoral life. (1 John 1:6) If we are to have God’s approval now and in the future, we need to behave as if everything we do were under a spotlight. In a sense, there is no such thing as a secret sin because everything we do is visible to Jehovah.—Heb. 4:13.

⁸ We have to reject ***the world’s view***

7. What pressure must we resist, and why?

8. What must we reject?

of sin. The apostle John wrote: “If we make the statement, ‘We have no sin,’ we are misleading ourselves.” (1 John 1:8) In John’s day, apostates claimed that a person could deliberately follow a course of sin and still have a relationship with God. Today, we are living among people who have a similar view. Many claim to believe in God, but they do not agree with Jehovah’s view of sin, especially when it involves the subject of sex. What Jehovah views as sinful conduct they call a personal preference, or an alternative lifestyle.

⁹ Young Christians in particular may feel pressured to adopt their classmates’ or workmates’ views of immoral conduct. That is what happened to Aleksandar. He recalls: “Some girls at school

9. How do young ones benefit by sticking to their Bible-based convictions?



Youths, strengthen your Bible-based convictions about what is right and what is wrong morally so that you can defend your faith
(See paragraph 9)

tried to pressure me into having sex with them. They said that since I did not have a girlfriend, I must be a homosexual.” If you face similar tests, remember that when you stick to your Bible-based convictions, you protect your self-respect, your health, your emotional well-being, and your relationship with Jehovah. And each time you resist temptation, it will get easier for you to do what is right. Remember, too, that this world’s twisted view of sex originates with Satan. So when you refuse to compromise, you ‘conquer the wicked one.’—1 John 2:14.

¹⁰ We acknowledge that Jehovah has the right to define what is sinful conduct. And we do our best not to commit a sin. But when we do sin, we confess

10. How does 1 John 1:9 help us to serve Jehovah with a clean conscience?

our wrongdoing to Jehovah in prayer. **(Read 1 John 1:9.)** And if we commit a serious sin, we seek the help of the elders, whom Jehovah has appointed to care for us. (Jas. 5:14-16) However, we should not be consumed by feelings of guilt over past mistakes. Why not? Because our loving Father provided the ransom sacrifice of his Son so that our sins can be forgiven. When Jehovah says that he will forgive repentant sinners, he means what he says. So there is nothing to stop us from serving Jehovah with a clean conscience.—1 John 2:1, 2, 12; 3:19, 20.

¹¹ We must reject *apostate teachings*. Since the beginning of the Christian congregation, the Devil has been using many deceivers to plant doubts in the

11. How can we protect our mind from teachings that could harm our faith?

minds of God's faithful servants. As a result, we need to know how to discern the difference between facts and lies.* Our enemies may use the Internet or social media to try to undermine our trust in Jehovah and our love for our brothers. Remember who is behind such propaganda, and reject it!—1 John 4:1, 6; Rev. 12:9.

¹² To resist Satan's attacks, we need to deepen our trust in Jesus and in the role he plays in God's purpose. We also need to trust in the only channel that Jehovah is using today. (Matt. 24:45-47) We deepen our trust by regularly studying God's Word. Then our faith will be like a tree that has roots that go deep into the ground. Paul made a similar point when writing to the Colossian congregation. He said: "Just as you have accepted Christ Jesus the Lord, go on walking in union with him, being rooted and built up in him and being stabilized in the faith." (Col. 2:6, 7) There is nothing that Satan or those influenced by him can do that will destabilize a Christian who has strengthened his own faith.—2 John 8, 9.

¹³ We must expect to be hated by the world. (1 John 3:13) John reminds us that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) As this system draws to an end, Satan's anger grows hotter. (Rev. 12:12) He uses more than subtle forms of attack, such

* See the study article "Do You Have the Facts?" in the August 2018 issue of *The Watchtower*.

12. Why should we deepen our appreciation for the truths we have learned?

13. What should we expect, and why?

as the lure of immorality or the lies of apostates. He will also use brute force. Satan knows that he has only a short period of time left to try to stop our preaching work or to break our faith. It is no surprise, then, that our work is restricted or banned in a number of countries. Even so, our brothers and sisters in those lands are enduring. They are proving that no matter what the wicked one throws at us, we can be victorious!

HELP ONE ANOTHER TO REMAIN IN THE TRUTH

¹⁴ To help our brothers and sisters to remain in the truth, we must **show compassion**. (1 John 3:10, 11, 16-18) We need to love one another not only when things are going well but also when problems arise. For example, do you know someone who has lost a loved one in death and needs to be comforted or helped in practical ways? Or have you heard that fellow believers suffered loss from a natural disaster and need help to rebuild their Kingdom Halls or homes? We show the depth of our love and compassion for our brothers and sisters not only by what we say but, more important, by what we do.

¹⁵ We imitate our loving heavenly Father when we show love for one another. **(Read 1 John 4:7, 8.)** An important way that we show love is by **forgiving one another**. For example, someone might hurt us but then apologize. We show love by forgiving him and putting his error be-

14. What is one way we can help our brothers and sisters to remain in the truth?

15. As stated at 1 John 4:7, 8, what do we need to do?

hind us. (Col. 3:13) A brother named Aldo faced this test when he heard a brother whom he respected make a hurtful comment about his ethnic background. Aldo says, “I constantly prayed to Jehovah to help me not to have negative feelings toward this brother.” But Aldo did something else. He decided to ask the brother to go out in service with him. As they worked together, Aldo explained how he was affected by the remark. “When the brother heard how I felt about his hurtful comment,” says Aldo, “he apologized. From the tone of his voice, I could sense how much he regretted what he had said. We parted as friends and put the problem behind us.”

¹⁶ The apostle John felt a deep, loving concern for the spiritual welfare of his brothers, and that feeling is clearly reflected in the counsel he gave in his three inspired letters. How encouraging it is to know that men and women, like

16-17. What should be our determination?

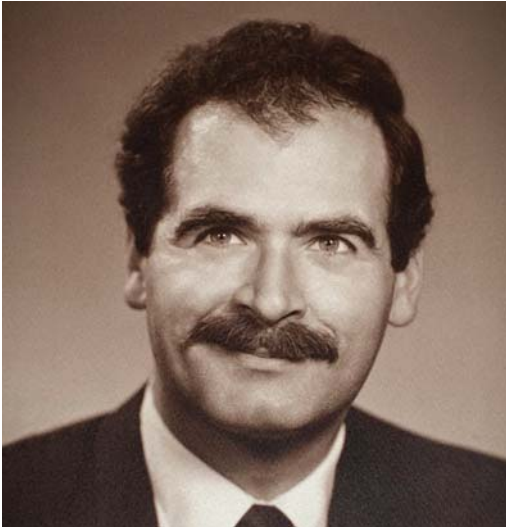
him, are anointed to be corulers with Christ!—1 John 2:27.

¹⁷ May we take to heart the counsel we have discussed. Let us be determined to walk in the truth, obeying Jehovah in all aspects of our life. Study his Word, and put your trust in it. Build strong faith in Jesus. Reject human philosophies and apostate teachings. Resist the pressure to live a double life and to give in to sin. Live by Jehovah’s high moral standards. And let us help our brothers remain strong by forgiving those who hurt us and helping those in need. Then, despite the struggles we face, we will keep walking in the truth.

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Pages 22-23: While in school, a young sister is bombarded with homosexual propaganda. (In some cultures, rainbow colors are used to signify homosexuality.) Later, she takes time to do research to fortify her Christian beliefs. This helps her to handle a difficult challenge.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What does it mean to walk in the truth?
- What obstacles do we face?
- How can we help our brothers and sisters remain in the truth?



I Have Done What I Ought to Have Done

AS TOLD BY DON RIDLEY

FOR over three decades, Donald Ridley represented the legal interests of Jehovah's Witnesses. He was instrumental in defining the rights of patients to refuse blood products. His work led to several state supreme court victories. Known to his friends as Don, he was diligent, humble, and self-sacrificing.

In 2019, Don was diagnosed with a rare neurological disease for which there is no cure. The disease progressed rapidly, and he died on August 16, 2019. This is his story.

I was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A., in 1954 to a middle-class, Roman Catholic family. I am the second oldest of five children. I attended a Catholic elementary school, and I was an altar boy. Still, I had very little Bible knowledge. Although I believed that there must be a God who created everything, I lost all faith in the church.

LEARNING THE TRUTH

During my first year at William Mitchell College of Law, Jehovah's Witnesses called at my home. I was busy doing my laundry, and the couple graciously agreed to return. When they did, I had two questions for them: "Why don't good people get ahead in the world?" and "What does it take to be happy?" I accepted the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* and the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, with its eye-catching green cover. I also agreed to a Bible study. This really opened my eyes. I was impressed with the idea that God's Kingdom is a much-needed government that will administer mankind's affairs on earth. I could see that human self-rule had

been a complete failure and that it had left a world full of pain, suffering, injustice, and tragedy.

I dedicated myself to Jehovah in early 1982 and got baptized later that year at the “Kingdom Truth” Convention held at the St. Paul Civic Center. I returned to the civic center the following week to take the Minnesota bar exam. In early October, I learned that I had passed the exam, which qualified me to practice law.

At that “Kingdom Truth” Convention, I met Mike Richardson, a Brooklyn Bethelite, who explained that a legal office had been established at headquarters. I remembered the words of the Ethiopian eunuch recorded at Acts 8:36 and asked myself, ‘What prevents me from asking to work at the Legal Office?’ So I applied for Bethel service.

My parents were not happy that I had become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. My dad asked me what working for Watchtower would do for my legal career. I explained that I would be doing a volunteer work. I told him I would be given \$75 a month, which was the monthly reimbursement for Bethelites.

After completing some employment obligations, I started my Bethel service in Brooklyn, New York, in 1984. I was assigned to the Legal Office. For me, the timing could not have been better.

THE STANLEY THEATER RENOVATION

The Stanley Theater in Jersey City, New Jersey, was purchased in November 1983. The brothers applied for permits to renovate the building’s electrical and plumbing systems. When they met with the local officials, the brothers explained that they intended to use the Stanley Theater as a convention hall for Jehovah’s Witnesses. That posed a problem. The city’s zoning ordinance restricted houses of worship to residential neighborhoods. The Stanley Theater was in the downtown business district, so the city officials refused to issue the permits. The brothers appealed the decision, but the appeal was denied.

During my first week at Bethel, the organization filed a lawsuit in the federal district court, challenging the denial of the permits. Because I had just finished my two-year clerkship in the federal district court in St. Paul, Minnesota, I was very familiar with



The Stanley Theater as it looked when it was purchased

State Supreme Court Victories

In re E.G. (1989), the **Illinois** Supreme Court recognized that a mature minor has a common-law right of self-determination and has the capacity to refuse a blood transfusion.

Public Health Tr. of Dade County v. Wons (1989), the **Florida** Supreme Court upheld that a competent adult has the right to refuse a blood transfusion.

Fosmire v. Nicoleau (1990), the **New York** Court of Appeals (the state's highest court) affirmed that competent adults have a right to determine the course of their own treatment, including the right to decline blood transfusions.

Stamford Hospital v. Vega (1996), the **Connecticut** Supreme Court ruled that a Witness mother's right to refuse a blood transfusion is deeply rooted in the common-law right of bodily self-determination.

the arguments presented. One of our attorneys argued that the Stanley Theater had been used for various public events, from movies to rock concerts. Why, then, should it be illegal to have a religious event? The federal district court considered the matter and ruled that Jersey City had violated our religious liberty. The court ordered the city to issue the needed permits, and I started to see how Jehovah blessed his organization's use of legal means to advance his work. I was so happy to have had a share in it.

The brothers launched a massive renovation project, and the graduation of the

79th class of Gilead was held in the Jersey City Assembly Hall on September 8, 1985, less than a year after the renovation started. I felt privileged to be able to advance Kingdom interests as part of the legal team, and the satisfaction I felt far surpassed any feeling that I had experienced in connection with a legal endeavor prior to my coming to Bethel. Little did I know that Jehovah had many more such privileges in store for me.

DEFENDING RIGHTS FOR BLOODLESS MEDICAL TREATMENT

In the 1980's, it was not uncommon for doctors and hospitals to override the request of an adult Witness to be treated without blood products. Pregnant women faced greater obstacles because judges often felt that the women had no legal right to turn down a transfusion. Judges reasoned that if a transfusion was not administered, the infant might be left without a mother.

On December 29, 1988, Sister Denise Nicoleau suffered severe hemorrhaging after giving birth to her son. Her hemoglobin dropped below 5.0, and her physician asked for her consent to transfuse blood. Sister Nicoleau refused. The next morning, the hospital sought to obtain a court order authorizing the hospital staff to administer what they considered to be necessary blood transfusions. Without conducting a hearing or even informing Sister Nicoleau or her husband, the judge authorized the hospital to administer the transfusions.

On Friday, December 30, the hospital staff transfused Sister Nicoleau despite the objections of her husband and other family members who were at her bedside. That evening, several family members and one or two elders were arrested for allegedly forming a human wall around Sister Nicoleau's bed to prevent the transfusions. On Saturday morning, December 31, the New York



A. With Philip Brumley in our younger years

B. From left to right: Richard Moake, Gregory Olds, Paul Polidoro, Philip Brumley, me, and Mario Moreno—our attorneys on the day that oral arguments were made at the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Watchtower v. Village of Stratton*. —See *Awake!* of January 8, 2003



City and Long Island news outlets were reporting the arrests.

On Monday morning, I spoke with the presiding justice, Milton Mollen. I described the facts of the case, stressing that the trial judge had signed the transfusion order without a hearing. Justice Mollen asked me to come to his office later that afternoon to discuss the facts and relevant law. My overseer, Philip Brumley, accompanied me to Justice Mollen’s chambers that evening. The judge also invited the hospital’s attorney to join us. Our discussion was heated. At one point, Brother Brumley made a note on his legal pad telling me that I should “tone it down.” In hindsight, that was good counsel because I was getting very worked up in refuting the attorney’s arguments.

After about an hour, Justice Mollen said that the case would be first on the docket the next morning. As we were leaving his chambers, Justice Mollen said that the hospital’s attorney had a “heavy burden tomorrow.” This meant that the attorney would be hard-pressed to defend his position. I felt

that Jehovah was reassuring me that our case was strong. I was humbled to think that Jehovah was using us to accomplish his will.

We worked into the night preparing our argument for the next morning. The courthouse is just a few blocks from Brooklyn Bethel, so most of those from our small Legal Office walked there. After the four-justice panel heard our arguments, they canceled the transfusion order. The high court ruled in Sister Nicoleau’s favor and established that the common practice of obtaining an order or a hearing without notice was a violation of fundamental constitutional rights.

New York’s highest court ultimately affirmed Sister Nicoleau’s right to be treated without blood. It was the first of four blood-related decisions by high state courts that I have had the privilege to share in. (See the box “State Supreme Court Victories.”) I have also joined other attorneys at Bethel in cases involving child custody, divorce, real estate, and zoning.

MY MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

When I first met my wife, Dawn, she was a single divorcée raising three children. She was earning a living and pioneering. She had experienced a difficult life, and I was deeply impressed by her determination to serve Jehovah. In 1992, we attended the “Light Bearers” District Convention in New York City, and I asked to court her. We married a year later. Having a spiritually-minded and fun-loving wife has been a gift from Jehovah. Dawn has truly rewarded me with good all the days of our life together.—Prov. 31:12.

When we got married, the children were 11, 13, and 16 years old. I wanted to be a good father to them, so I carefully read and applied everything I could find in our publications about being a stepparent. There were challenges over the years, but I rejoice that the children have come to accept me as their trusted friend and loving dad. We had an open-door policy with our kids’ friends and thoroughly enjoyed a houseful of energetic teenagers.

With my wife, Dawn



In 2013, Dawn and I moved to Wisconsin to help care for aging parents. To my surprise, my Bethel service did not end. I was invited to continue offering legal assistance to our organization as a temporary volunteer.

A SUDDEN CHANGE

In September 2018, I noticed that I was clearing my throat a lot. Our local doctor examined me, but he could not determine what caused the problem. Later, another doctor suggested that I see a neurologist. In January 2019, the neurologist made a tentative diagnosis of a rare neurological disorder that is called progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP).

Three days later, while ice skating, I fractured my right wrist. I have been skating all my life; it was second nature to me. So I knew that I was losing motor skills. The rapid development of my neurological disorder has been surprising, adversely affecting my speech, mobility, and ability to swallow.

I have been so privileged to use my experience as a lawyer to play a small role in advancing Kingdom interests. And I have been privileged to write many articles in professional journals as well as to speak at medicolegal seminars around the world, defending the right of Jehovah’s people to choose nonblood medical and surgical management. Still, to paraphrase Luke 17: 10: ‘I am a good-for-nothing slave. What I have done is what I ought to have done.’

When did Jesus become High Priest, and is there a distinction between when the new covenant was validated and when it was inaugurated?

■ The evidence shows that Jesus became High Priest when he got baptized in 29 C.E. What is the evidence? At his baptism, Jesus presented himself for sacrifice on the altar of God's "will." (Gal. 1:4; Heb. 10:5-10) Since that symbolic altar has been in existence from Jesus' baptism onward, the great spiritual temple—which represents the arrangement for pure worship of Jehovah based on the ransom—must also have come into existence at that point. The altar is a key feature of that spiritual temple.—Matt. 3:16, 17; Heb. 5:4-6.

With the great spiritual temple in place, a high priest was needed to officiate there. To fill that need, Jesus was anointed "with holy spirit and power." (Acts 10:37, 38; Mark 1:9-11) Yet, how can we be sure that Jesus was appointed as High Priest before his death and resurrection? We find a compelling reason when we consider the example of Aaron and his successors who served as high priests under the Mosaic Law.

As required by the Law, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy of the tabernacle and, later, the temple's Most Holy. This compartment was separated from the Holy by a curtain. The high priest passed beyond that curtain only on the Day of Atonement. (Heb. 9:1-3, 6, 7) Just as Aaron and his successors were anointed as high priests before entering "through the [literal] curtain" of the tabernacle, Jesus must have been appointed as the High Priest of Jehovah's great spiritual temple before he died and thereafter passed "through the curtain,

that is, his flesh" to heavenly life. (Heb. 10:20) For this reason, the apostle Paul referred to Jesus as coming "as a high priest" and then passing "through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands" and into "heaven itself."—Heb. 9:11, 24.

■ There is no distinction between when the new covenant was validated and when it was inaugurated. Why not? When Jesus ascended to heaven and offered up his perfect human life in our behalf, he set in motion a process that validated, or legalized, the new covenant. That same process also inaugurated the covenant, or put it into effect. What steps were involved in doing so?

First, Jesus appeared before Jehovah; next, Jesus offered up the value of his sacrifice to Jehovah; and finally, Jehovah accepted the value of Jesus' shed blood. Until these steps were taken, the new covenant was not operative.

The Bible does not tell us exactly when Jehovah accepted the value of Jesus' sacrifice. Accordingly, we cannot pinpoint a specific time when the new covenant was validated and also put into effect. Nevertheless, we do know that Jesus ascended to heaven ten days before Pentecost. (Acts 1:3) At some point during that short period of time, he presented the value of his sacrifice to Jehovah, who accepted it. (Heb. 9:12) Proof that the new covenant was now operative was **visibly evident** at Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4, 32, 33) The new covenant was then obviously in place and working.

In summary, the new covenant was validated and inaugurated after Jehovah accepted the value of Jesus' shed blood and brought the anointed into that covenant. The covenant then became operative with the High Priest, Jesus, serving as its Mediator.—Heb. 7:25; 8:1-3, 6; 9:13-15.

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COVER PICTURE:

When David met Goliath's challenge, he turned what seemed to be a disadvantage into an opportunity to see God's power at work (See study article 29, paragraph 11)

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