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SONG 138

Beauty in
Gray-Headedness

PREVIEW

Faithful older ones are like precious treasures. This article will encourage us to heighten our appreciation for them and will discuss how we can benefit fully from their wisdom and experience. It will also assure older ones that they occupy an important place in God's organization.

Treasure Our Faithful Older Ones

“Gray hair is a crown of beauty.”—PROV. 16:31.

VISITORS to a state park in Arkansas, U.S.A., might find diamonds in plain view on the ground. However, those diamonds are in their natural, uncut state. As a result, many who see the diamonds might not realize what they are looking at and just walk right past these treasures.

² In some ways, our faithful older ones are like those diamonds; they are precious treasures. God's Word likens the gray hair of such ones to a crown. (**Read Proverbs 16:31; 20:29**) These treasures, though, can easily be overlooked. Younger ones who recognize the value of older ones can gain something more beneficial than literal riches. In this article, we will answer three questions: Why does Jehovah view faithful older ones as treasures? What place does Jehovah have in his arrangement for such ones? What can we do to benefit fully from their example?

WHY JEHOVAH VIEWS FAITHFUL OLDER ONES AS TREASURES

³ Faithful older ones are precious to Jehovah God. He sees them for who they really are on the inside, and he knows and values their wonderful qualities. He appreciates it when older ones pass on to younger ones the wisdom they have gained during a lifetime of faithful service. (Job 12:12; Prov. 1:1-4) Jehovah

1-2. (a) According to Proverbs 16:31, how should we view faithful older ones? (b) What questions will we answer in this article?

3. In line with Psalm 92:12-15, why are faithful older ones precious to Jehovah?

also treasures their endurance. (Mal. 3: 16) Their lives have not been trouble free; yet, their faith in Jehovah has never wavered. Their hope for the future is brighter than it was when they first learned the truth. And Jehovah loves them because they continue to declare his name “even in old age.”—**Read Psalm 92:12-15.**

⁴ If you are getting well along in years, be assured that Jehovah remembers the work you have done in the past. (Heb. 6:10) You have zealously supported the preaching work, and that pleases our heavenly Father. You have endured trials—even heartbreaking ones—upheld the Bible’s righteous standards, carried heavy loads of responsibility, and trained others. You have done your best to keep pace with Jehovah’s fast-moving organization. You have supported and encouraged others as they pursued the full-time ministry. Jehovah God loves

4. What thoughts should comfort our older brothers and sisters?

you very much for being loyal. He promises that “he will not abandon his loyal ones”! (Ps. 37:28) He gives you this assurance: “Until your hair is gray I will keep bearing you.” (Isa. 46:4) So do not conclude that in view of your advancing years, you no longer have an important role in Jehovah’s organization. You most certainly do!

GOD HAS A PLACE FOR OLDER ONES

⁵ Older ones have much to offer. Although they may not have the strength they once had, they do have a wealth of experience that they have acquired over the years. Jehovah can continue to use them in various ways, as the following examples from the past and the present show.

⁶ We can find good examples in the Bible of faithful ones who actively served Jehovah into their old age. Moses, for

5. What should older ones keep in mind?

6-7. Give examples from the Bible of older ones who received blessings for their loyal service.



Faithful older ones are precious to Jehovah God and to his people
(See paragraph 3)



Sister Didur, now in her 80's,
continues in her faithful service
(See paragraph 8)

instance, was about 80 years old when he began serving as Jehovah's prophet and representative to the nation of Israel. Jehovah was still using Daniel as His spokesman when the prophet was probably in his 90's. And the apostle John was likely also in his 90's when he was inspired to write the book of Revelation.

⁷ Many other faithful ones were not prominent or well-known, and they could easily have been overlooked. Still, Jehovah noticed them and rewarded their loyalty. For example, the "righteous and devout" man Simeon is mentioned just briefly in the Bible, but Jehovah knew who he was and granted him the privilege of seeing the infant Jesus and of prophesying about the child and his mother. (Luke 2:22, 25-35) Think, too, of the widowed prophetess Anna. She was 84 years old but was "never missing from the temple." Her faithful "meeting attendance" was richly rewarded when on one occasion she too

saw the infant Jesus. Both Simeon and Anna were precious to Jehovah.—Luke 2:36-38.

⁸ In modern times, many faithful older ones serve as excellent examples for younger ones. Consider the experience of Sister Lois Didur. She was just 21 years old when she started to serve as a special pioneer in Canada. After that, she and her husband, John, spent a number of years in the traveling work. They later served at Canada Bethel for over 20 years. When Lois was 58, she and John were invited to accept an assignment in Ukraine. What would they do? Would they conclude that they were too old to serve in another country? They accepted the assignment, and John was appointed to serve on the Branch Committee there. After John's death seven years later, Lois decided to stay in her assignment. Now, at the age of 81, Lois continues to serve as a productive and much loved member of the Ukraine Bethel family.

⁹ Widows like Lois may not be noticed as much as they were when their husband was alive; nevertheless, widowhood does not diminish their value. Jehovah highly values sisters who supported their husband for years and now continue to show the same steadfastness. (1 Tim. 5:3) In addition, they provide real encouragement to younger ones.

¹⁰ The many faithful older ones who live in adult care facilities are also spiri-

8-9. What contribution do widows continue to make?

10. What excellent example did Tony set?

tual treasures. For example, a brother named Tony now lives in such a facility. He got baptized in Pennsylvania, U.S.A., in August 1942 at the age of 20. He soon faced the neutrality issue and as a result spent two and a half years in prison. He and his wife, Hilda, raised two children in the truth. Over the years, Tony served in three congregations as the presiding overseer (now known as the coordinator of the body of elders) and as a circuit assembly overseer. He conducted meetings and Bible studies at a state prison. At 98, Tony is not ready to take it easy. He keeps doing his very best to serve Jehovah and to work closely with the local congregation!

¹¹ How can we show honor to older ones who live in adult care facilities? Elders can include them in congregation activities to the extent possible. We can show personal attention by visiting them or inviting them to a video chat. We want to give special attention to older ones who may be living in a facility far from their home congregation. If we are not attentive, we could overlook these older ones. Some of them may not find it easy or think it appropriate to talk about themselves. But we will benefit greatly when we take the time to draw them out and listen as they tell about the joys they have experienced in Jehovah's organization.

¹² We may be surprised to find that there are outstanding examples of faithful older ones in our own congregation.

11. How can we show that we treasure those who live in adult care facilities?

12. What can we find in our own congregation?

A sister named Harriette served Jehovah faithfully for decades in her home congregation in New Jersey, U.S.A. Then she moved away to live with her daughter. Brothers in her new congregation took the time to get to know her, and they discovered a treasure. She encouraged them with accounts of field service when she first learned the truth in the 1920's. Back then, she always carried a toothbrush with her when she went preaching—in case she got arrested. In fact, twice in 1933 she spent a week in jail. During such times, her non-Witness, supportive husband cared for their three young children. Certainly, faithful older ones like Harriette deserve to be treasured!

¹³ Our older brothers and sisters have an important role in Jehovah's arrangement. They have seen how Jehovah has in many different ways blessed his organization and them personally. They have learned important lessons from mistakes they have made. View them as a "fountain of wisdom," and draw on their experience. (Prov. 18:4) If you take the time to get to know them, your faith can be strengthened and you will learn a thing or two!

BENEFIT FULLY FROM THE EXAMPLE OF OLDER ONES

¹⁴ Take the initiative to talk with older ones. **(Read Deuteronomy 32:7.)** True, their eyesight may have dimmed, their pace may have slowed, and their speech

13. What have we learned about the place that older ones occupy in Jehovah's arrangement?

14. What does Deuteronomy 32:7 encourage younger ones to do?



Just as Elisha benefited from being with Elijah, brothers and sisters can benefit from experiences recounted by ones who have long served Jehovah (See paragraphs 14-15)

may have softened, but they are young at heart, and they have made “a good name” with Jehovah. (Eccl. 7:1) Remember why Jehovah treasures them. Continue to show them honor. Be like Elisha. He insisted on staying close to Elijah on their last day together. Three times Elisha declared: “I will not leave you.” —2 Ki. 2:2, 4, 6.

¹⁵ Show genuine interest in older ones by kindly drawing them out. (Prov. 1:5; 20:5; 1 Tim. 5:1, 2) Ask such questions as these: “When you were younger, what convinced you that you had found the truth?” “How have your experiences drawn you closer to Jehovah?” “What have you found to be the secret to remaining happy in Jehovah’s service?” (1 Tim. 6:6-8) Then listen as they tell their story.

¹⁶ When an older one and a younger one talk with each other, both benefit. (Rom. 1:12) You younger ones will en-

rich your appreciation for the way Jehovah cares for his faithful servants, and the older one will feel dignified. He will enjoy recounting to you how he has received Jehovah’s blessings.

¹⁷ Physical beauty usually fades with age, but those who are loyal to Jehovah become more beautiful to him with each passing year. (1 Thess. 1:2, 3) Why is that true? Because over the years, they have allowed God’s spirit to mold them and refine them. The more we get to know our precious older brothers and sisters, honor them, and learn from them, the more we will view them as priceless treasures!

¹⁸ The congregation grows stronger not only when younger ones treasure older ones but also when older ones value younger ones. In our next article, we will discuss how older ones can show that they treasure younger ones in the congregation.

15. What questions might we ask older ones?

16. How can talking with each other benefit both an older one and a younger one?

17. Why can we say that faithful older ones become more beautiful with the passing of years?

18. What will we consider in the next article?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

■ Why does Jehovah view faithful older ones as precious treasures?

■ What role do older ones have in the congregation?

■ How can younger ones benefit from getting to know older ones?

SONG 88

Make Me Know Your Ways

PREVIEW

Our congregations are blessed with many young men and women who strive to support Jehovah's organization. Older ones in the congregation, regardless of their culture or background, can help younger ones to use their strength fully in Jehovah's service.

Value the Strength of Youth

"The glory of young men is their strength."—PROV. 20:29.

AS WE grow older, we may be afraid that we are not going to be as useful to Jehovah as we once were. While it may be true that we have less energy than before, we can use the wisdom and experience we have acquired to help younger ones reach their full potential and take on new responsibilities. One longtime elder said, "When I began to feel the limitations of old age, I was grateful that there were qualified younger brothers available to take up the work."

² The preceding article discussed how younger ones benefit when they draw closer to older ones. In this article, we will see how such qualities as humility, modesty, gratitude, and generosity can help older ones to work along with younger ones, resulting in a blessing for the entire congregation.

BE HUMBLE

³ Older ones must be humble if they want to help younger ones. A humble person views others as being superior to him. (**Read Philippians 2:3, 4.**) Older ones who show this quality realize that in many cases there is more than one Scriptural and effective way to carry out an assignment. Thus, they have a realistic view of the way they did things in the past. (Eccl. 7:10) While they have much valu-

1. What practical goal can we set for ourselves as we grow older?
2. What will we discuss in this article?
3. According to Philippians 2:3, 4, what is humility, and how can it help a Christian?



Older ones generously share their experience with others
(See paragraphs 4-5)



able experience to share with the younger generation, they realize that “the scene of this world is changing” and that it may be necessary for them to adapt to new circumstances.—1 Cor. 7:31.

⁴ Humble older ones recognize that as they age, they cannot do as much as they once did. Consider, for example, our circuit overseers. When they reach 70 years of age, they are invited to take up a different assignment. That may be a challenge. They cherished the privilege of serving their brothers. It was an assignment they loved, and the desire to be used in that way

4. How do circuit overseers show an attitude similar to that of the Levites?

is still burning brightly in their heart. But they understand that younger hands are needed to care for the work. They thus show an attitude similar to that of the Levites in ancient Israel who, at the age of 50, were required to discontinue their service at the tabernacle. The joy of those older Levites was not tied to a particular privilege. They took full advantage of the privileges that were available to them, doing all they could to assist the younger ones. (Num. 8:25, 26) Today, former circuit overseers, although no longer serving a number of congregations, are proving to be a real blessing to the congregation to which they are assigned.

⁵ Consider the example of Dan, who served as a circuit overseer for 23 years. When Dan reached the age of 70, he and his wife, Katie, were assigned to be special pioneers. How have they adjusted to their new circumstances? Dan says that now he is busier than ever! He cares for his congregation responsibilities, helps brothers to qualify as ministerial servants, and trains others to share in witnessing in metropolitan areas and in prisons. Older ones, whether you are in full-time service or not, you can do much to help others. How? Adapt to your changed circumstances, set new goals, and focus on what you can do rather than on what you cannot do.

BE MODEST

⁶ A modest person acknowledges his limitations. (Prov. 11:2) Modesty moves him to adjust his expectations of how much he can do. As a result, he will remain happy and productive. We could compare a modest person with someone driving a vehicle uphill. The driver needs to change to a lower gear in order to continue driving up the slope. True, he will probably travel more slowly, but he will keep moving forward. Similarly, a modest person knows when it is time to “change to a lower gear” so that he can continue to be active and productive in Jehovah’s service.—Phil. 4:5.

⁷ Note the example of Barzillai, who was 80 years old when King David invited him to become part of the royal

court. Modest Barzillai declined the king’s offer. Recognizing his personal limitations because of his age, Barzillai recommended that a younger man, Chimham, go in his place. (2 Sam. 19:35-37) Like Barzillai, older men are happy to give younger men the opportunity to serve.

⁸ King David also set an excellent example of modesty. With all his heart, he wanted to build a house for Jehovah. But when Jehovah informed him that this privilege would be given to young Solomon, David accepted Jehovah’s decision and gave his wholehearted support to the project. (1 Chron. 17:4; 22:5) David did not feel that he was the better one for the assignment because Solomon was “young and inexperienced.” (1 Chron. 29:1) David knew that the success of the construction project depended on Jehovah’s blessing, not on the age or the experience of those taking the lead. In imitation of David, older ones today remain active even when their role changes. And they know that Jehovah will bless the young ones who are doing the work they once did.

⁹ A modern-day example of modesty is a brother named Shigeo. In 1976, at 30 years of age, he was appointed to serve on a Branch Committee. In 2004 he became the Branch Committee coordinator. Later he realized that he had reached the limit of his physical strength and could no longer handle the work promptly. He prayerfully consid-

5. What do you learn from the example set by Dan and Katie?

6. Why is it wise to be modest? Illustrate.

7. How did Barzillai show modesty?

8. How did King David show modesty regarding the construction of the temple?

9. How did a Branch Committee member show modesty?



King David accepted God's decision that his son would construct the temple
(See paragraph 8)

ered the benefits of having a younger brother take over the responsibilities. Although no longer the coordinator, Shigeo continues to serve as a cooperative member of the Branch Committee. As seen in the examples of Barzillai, King David, and Shigeo, a person who is humble and modest will focus, not on the inexperience of young ones, but on their strengths. He will view them, not as competitors, but as fellow workers. —Prov. 20:29.

BE GRATEFUL

¹⁰ Older ones view younger ones as gifts from Jehovah for which they are grateful. As their energy decreases, older ones are thankful that those who have the strength of youth are willing and

10. What attitude do older ones have toward younger ones in the congregation?

able to fill the need and serve the congregation.

¹¹ The Bible character Naomi is an excellent example of an older one who gratefully accepted help from a younger one. At first, Naomi urged her widowed daughter-in-law Ruth to return to her own people. However, when Ruth insisted on accompanying Naomi back to Bethlehem, she accepted Ruth's loyal support. (Ruth 1:7, 8, 18) And what a blessing that was for both women! **(Read Ruth 4:13-16.)** Humility will move older ones to follow Naomi's example.

¹² The apostle Paul was grateful for the help he received. For example, he

11. How does Ruth 4:13-16 illustrate the blessings that can come from gratefully accepting the help of younger ones?

12. How did the apostle Paul express his gratitude?

thanked the Christians in Philippi for material gifts they had sent to him. (Phil. 4:16) He expressed gratitude for the help that Timothy had given him. (Phil. 2:19-22) And Paul thanked God for those who came to encourage him as he was being transported to Rome as a prisoner. (Acts 28:15) Paul was a dynamic individual who traveled thousands of miles to preach and to strengthen the congregations. Yet, he was not too proud to accept support from his brothers and sisters.

¹³ Older ones, you can show your gratitude for the younger ones in your congregation in a number of ways. If they want to help you with transportation, shopping, or other physical needs, gratefully accept their assistance. View such help as an expression of Jehovah's love. You may be surprised at the bonds of friendship that might develop. Always show interest in the spiritual growth of your young companions, and tell them how happy you are to see young ones reaching out to be of greater service in the congregation. And be willing to spend time sharing your life's experiences with them. When you do, you will "show yourselves thankful" to Jehovah for the younger ones whom he has drawn to the congregation.—Col. 3:15; John 6:44; 1 Thess. 5:18.

BE GENEROUS

¹⁴ We find in the example of King David another vital quality that older ones need to show—generosity. He made sub-

stantial donations from his personal wealth to support the construction of the temple. (1 Chron. 22:11-16; 29:3, 4) He did this even though primary credit for the project would go to his son Solomon. When we no longer have the physical strength to participate in theocratic construction projects, we can continue to support these projects by means of our contributions, to the extent that our circumstances allow. And we can help younger ones to benefit from the experience we have acquired over the years.

¹⁵ In regard to generosity, consider the example set by the apostle Paul. He invited Timothy to join him in the missionary work, and Paul generously shared his preaching and teaching methods with this younger man. (Acts 16:1-3) Paul's training helped Timothy to be effective in spreading the good news. (1 Cor. 4:17) Timothy, in turn, used Paul's methods to train others.

¹⁶ Older ones today are not afraid that they will no longer be useful if they train younger ones to do the work they used to do in the congregation. For example, over the years, Shigeo, mentioned earlier, gave practical training to younger members of the Branch Committee. He did this in order to serve the interests of the Kingdom work in the country where he is located. As a result, when the time came, a well-trained brother was available to replace him as coordinator. Shigeo continues to share his more than 45 years of Branch Committee experience

13. How can older ones show their gratitude for younger ones?

14. How did King David show his generosity?

15. What valuable gifts did the apostle Paul share with Timothy?

16. Why did Shigeo train others?

with younger brothers. What a blessing such ones are to God's people!

¹⁷ You older brothers and sisters are living proof that serving Jehovah with faith and integrity is the best way of life. By your example, you show that it is worth the effort to learn Bible principles and apply them in your life. You know from experience how things were done in the past, but you also see the need to adapt to changing circumstances. You older ones who recently got baptized also have much to give; you can share the joys of getting to know Jehovah later in life. Younger ones will appreciate hearing about your experiences and the lessons you have learned. If you “practice giving” from your storehouse of experience, Jehovah will bless you richly.—**Read Luke 6:38.**

17. In harmony with Luke 6:38, what can older ones give to others?

¹⁸ As you dear older ones draw closer to younger ones, you will be able to support one another. (Rom. 1:12) Each has something of value that the other does not possess. Older ones have the wisdom and experience that they gained with the passing of time. Younger ones have energy and strength. When young and old work together as friends, they bring praise to our loving heavenly Father and are a blessing to all in the congregation.

18. What mutual benefit can older and younger ones enjoy?

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 9: When a circuit overseer reached 70 years of age, he and his wife received a new assignment. Their years of experience allow them to train others in the congregation where they now serve.

HOW CAN THESE QUALITIES HELP OLDER ONES TO TRAIN AND ENCOURAGE YOUNGER ONES IN THE CONGREGATION?

■ Humility and modesty

■ Gratitude

■ Generosity

SONG 24

Come to
Jehovah's Mountain

PREVIEW

This discussion provides an updated understanding of Haggai 2:7. In this article, we will learn how we can share in an exciting work that is shaking all the nations. We will also learn that this shaking work produces both a positive and a negative reaction.

“I Will Shake All the Nations”

“I will shake all the nations, and the precious things of all the nations will come in.”—HAG. 2:7.

“WITHIN minutes, the shops and old buildings started falling like a pack of cards.” “There was panic everywhere . . . A lot of people said it lasted for about two minutes. To me, it seemed like forever.” Those are the comments of some who survived an earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015. If you were to experience such a traumatic event, you would not easily forget it.

² We are, however, at this very moment experiencing a different kind of shaking, a shaking that does not involve a single city or country. Rather, it involves all the nations, and it has been going on for decades. This shaking was foretold by the prophet Haggai. He wrote: “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘Yet once more—in a little while—and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.’”—Hag. 2:6.

³ The shaking that Haggai describes is not like a literal earthquake, which brings only destruction. Instead, it produces good results. Jehovah himself tells us: “I will shake all the nations, and the precious things of all the nations will come in; and I will fill this house with glory.” (Hag. 2:7) What did this prophecy mean for those who lived in Haggai’s time? And what does it mean for us today? We will discuss the answers to those questions and also learn how we have a part in shaking the nations today.

1-2. What symbolic shaking was foretold for our time?

3. How is this symbolic shaking unlike any literal earthquake?

AN ENCOURAGING MESSAGE IN HAGGAI'S DAY

⁴ The prophet Haggai received an important commission from Jehovah. Consider the background. Haggai had likely been among those who in 537 B.C.E. returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon. Soon after they arrived at their destination, those faithful worshippers laid the foundation of Jehovah's house, or temple. (Ezra 3:8, 10) But before long, a sad situation developed. They got discouraged and stopped working on the project because of opposition. (Ezra 4:4; Hag. 1:1, 2) So in 520 B.C.E., Jehovah commissioned Haggai to rekindle their zeal and motivate them to complete the temple.*—Ezra 6:14, 15.

⁵ Haggai's message was designed to build faith in Jehovah. The prophet boldly conveyed these words to the downhearted Jews: "'Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares Jehovah, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares Jehovah of armies." (Hag. 2:4) The expression "Jehovah of armies" must have been reassuring. Jehovah has a vast army of angelic warriors under his command, so the Jews needed to rely on him to succeed.

⁶ Jehovah inspired Haggai to deliver a message that described a symbolic

* We know that Haggai's mission was successful because the temple was completed by 515 B.C.E.

4. Why did Jehovah send the prophet Haggai to His people?

5. Why must Haggai's message have been reassuring to God's people?

6. What would result from the shaking that Haggai foretold?

shaking of all the nations. This revelation reassured those disheartened temple builders that Jehovah was going to shake up Persia, the world power that encompassed many nations of that day. And what would result from that shaking? First, God's people would finish the construction of the temple. Then, even non-Jews would join them in worshipping Jehovah at that restored temple. What an encouraging message that must have been for God's people!—Zech. 8:9.

AN EARTHSHAKING WORK TODAY

⁷ What does Haggai's prophecy mean for us today? Once again Jehovah is shaking all the nations, and this time we are involved. Consider this fact: In 1914, Jehovah installed Jesus Christ as King of His heavenly Kingdom. (Ps. 2:6) The establishment of that Kingdom was bad news for world leaders. It meant that "the appointed times of the nations"—the period during which there was no ruler directly representing Jehovah—had been fulfilled, or had come to an end. (Luke 21:24) In recognition of that fact, particularly since 1919, Jehovah's people have been pointing to God's Kingdom as the only hope for mankind. This preaching of the "good news of the Kingdom" has shaken the whole world.—Matt. 24:14.

⁸ How have people reacted to this message? Most have reacted negatively. **(Read Psalm 2:1-3.)** The nations have become agitated. They refuse to accept

7. What shaking work are we involved in today? Explain.

8. According to Psalm 2:1-3, how have the majority of the nations reacted to this message?



HAGGAI 2:7

Jehovah's appointed Ruler. They do not view the Kingdom message we preach as "good news." In fact, some governments have even banned the preaching work! Even though many of the rulers of these nations claim to serve God, they do not want to give up their own power and authority. So just as the rulers did in Jesus' day, rulers today oppose Jehovah's Anointed One by attacking his loyal followers.—Acts 4:25-28.

⁹ How does Jehovah respond to the negative reaction of the nations? Psalm 2:10-12 answers: "So now, you kings, show insight; accept correction, you judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Honor the son, or God will become indignant and you will perish from the way, for His anger flares up quickly. Happy are all those taking refuge in Him." Jehovah kindly grants these opposers a window of opportunity. They can still change their

minds and accept Jehovah's Kingdom. However, time is running out. We are living in "the last days" of this system of things. (2 Tim. 3:1; Isa. 61:2) It has never been more urgent for people to get the facts and make the right choice.

A POSITIVE REACTION TO THE SHAKING

¹⁰ The figurative shaking that Haggai foretold has a positive effect on some people. He tells us that as a result of the shaking, "the precious things [honesthearted people] of all the nations will come" to worship Jehovah.* (**Read Haggai 2:7-9.**) Isaiah as well as Micah foretold similar developments that would occur "in the last days."—Isa. 2:2-4, ftn.; Mic. 4:1, 2, ftn.

* This is an adjustment in understanding. At times we said that the drawing of honesthearted ones to Jehovah was not caused by the shaking of all the nations. See "Questions From Readers" in the May 15, 2006, issue of *The Watchtower*.

9. How does Jehovah respond to the negative reaction of the nations?

10. What positive reaction to the shaking work is described at Haggai 2:7-9?



Are you having a full share in the earthshaking work that is being done today?
(See paragraphs 7-8)



HAGGAI 2:20-22

¹¹ Consider the effect that the earthshaking message had on a brother named Ken, who serves at world headquarters. He still vividly remembers when he first heard the Kingdom message some 40 years ago. Ken says: “When I first heard the truth from God’s Word, I was grateful to learn that we are living in the last days of this system of things. I saw that in order to win God’s approval and gain everlasting life, I had to escape from this unstable world and stand firmly on Jehovah’s side. I prayerfully did so immediately. I left the world behind and fled to the security of God’s Kingdom, which cannot be shaken.”

¹² Jehovah has obviously been blessing his people. During these last days, we have seen a huge increase in the number of those worshipping him. In 1914 there were just a few thousand of us. Now

there are over eight million actively worshipping God, and millions more join us each year to commemorate the Memorial. In this way, the earthly courtyards of Jehovah’s spiritual temple—his arrangement for pure worship—have been filled with “the precious things of all the nations.” Jehovah’s name has also been glorified by the changes these ones make as they put on the new personality. —Eph. 4:22-24.

¹³ These exciting developments have fulfilled other prophecies, such as the one found in Isaiah chapter 60. Verse 22 of that chapter says: “The little one will become a thousand and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, will speed it up in its own time.” Because of the influx of true worshippers, something wonderful happens. These “precious things” bring with them various skills and abilities, along with a willing spirit to join in the preaching of the

11. How did one brother react to the Kingdom message when he first heard it?

12. How has Jehovah’s spiritual temple been filled with glory during these last days?

13. What other prophecies have been fulfilled by these exciting developments? (See cover picture.)

“good news of the Kingdom.” Consequently, as Isaiah expressed it, “the milk of nations” is being made available to Jehovah’s people. (Isa. 60:5, 16) With the help of these precious men and women, the preaching work is being carried out in 240 countries and literature is being produced in over 1,000 languages.

A TIME OF DECISION

¹⁴ In this time of the end, the shaking of the nations is forcing people to make a decision. Will they support God’s Kingdom, or will they place their confidence in the governments of this world? This is the choice that all will face. Although Jehovah’s people obey the laws of the government of the land in which they live, they remain completely neutral with regard to the politics of this world. (Rom. 13:1-7) They know that the Kingdom is the only true solution to mankind’s problems. That Kingdom is no part of this world.—John 18:36, 37.

¹⁵ The book of Revelation describes a testing of the loyalty of God’s people in the last days. That testing will continue to bring intense pressure on us. The political systems of this world will demand our worship and will persecute those who refuse to support them. (Rev. 13:12, 15) They will put “under compulsion all people—the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the free and the slaves—that these should be marked on their right hand or on their forehead.” (Rev. 13:16) Slaves in ancient times were branded with a mark to show who owned

them. Similarly, all in our day will be expected to have a symbolic mark on their hand or forehead. Their thoughts and actions will show that they belong to and support the political systems.

¹⁶ Will we accept this symbolic mark and give our allegiance to political governments? Those who refuse to receive the mark will face difficulties and danger. The book of Revelation goes on to say: “Nobody can buy or sell except a person having the mark.” (Rev. 13:17) But God’s people know what God will do to those who have the mark mentioned at Revelation 14:9, 10. Rather than bear that mark, they will, in effect, write on their hand, “Belonging to Jehovah.” (Isa. 44:5) Now is the time to make sure that our loyalty to Jehovah is strong. If it is, Jehovah will gladly claim us as his own!

A FINAL SHAKING

¹⁷ Jehovah has shown great patience during these last days. He does not want anyone to be destroyed. (2 Pet. 3:9) He has given all an opportunity to repent and to make the right decision. But his patience has limits. Those who reject this opportunity will find themselves in a situation similar to that of Pharaoh in Moses’ day. Jehovah said to Pharaoh: “By now I could have thrust my hand out to strike you and your people with a devastating plague, and you would have been wiped out from the earth. But for this very reason I have kept you in existence: to show you my power and to

14. What decision do people have to make now?

15. What great test of loyalty is described in the book of Revelation?

16. Why is it urgent to strengthen our loyalty to Jehovah now?

17. What do we need to remember with regard to Jehovah’s patience?

have my name declared in all the earth.” (Ex. 9:15, 16) All the nations will eventually have to know that Jehovah is the only true God. (Ezek. 38:23) How will this happen?

¹⁸ Centuries after Haggai’s day, the apostle Paul was inspired to show that the words found at **Haggai 2:6, 20-22** would have a future fulfillment. (**Read.**) Paul wrote: “Now he has promised: ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.’ Now the expression ‘yet once more’ indicates the removal of the things that are shaken, things that have been made, in order that the things not shaken may remain.” (Heb. 12:26, 27) Unlike the shaking mentioned at Haggai 2:7, this shaking will mean everlasting destruction for those who, like Pharaoh, refuse to acknowledge Jehovah’s right to rule.

¹⁹ What will not be shaken, or removed? Paul continued: “Seeing that we are to receive a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us continue to receive undeserved kindness, through which we may acceptably offer God sacred service

18. (a) What other type of shaking is described at Haggai 2:6, 20-22? (b) How do we know that Haggai’s words will have a future fulfillment?

19. What will not be shaken, and how do we know?

with godly fear and awe.” (Heb. 12:28) Yes, when the dust settles after this final great shaking, only God’s Kingdom will remain unshaken. It will still be firmly in place!—Ps. 110:5, 6; Dan. 2:44.

²⁰ There is no time to waste! People must choose: Will they continue to support the way of life promoted by this world, leading to destruction, or will they work to bring their life into harmony with God’s will, leading to everlasting life? (Heb. 12:25) By our preaching work, we can help people decide what position they will take on this important issue. May we help many more precious ones take their stand for God’s Kingdom. And may we keep in mind the words of our Lord Jesus: “This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”—Matt. 24:14.

20. What choice must people make, and how can we help them?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 16:** Haggai urged God’s people to have zeal in the temple rebuilding; God’s people in modern times have zealously declared God’s message. **Page 17:** A couple share in an earthshaking proclamation work about a final shaking to come.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT THE SHAKING OF THE NATIONS?

■ Psalm 2:1-3

■ Haggai 2:7-9

■ Haggai 2:20-22

SONG 3

Our Strength, Our Hope,
Our Confidence

PREVIEW

We enjoy the extraordinary privilege of being part of a loving family of brothers and sisters. All of us want to strengthen the bond of love that exists among us. How can we do so? By imitating the way in which our loving Father treats us and by following the examples of Jesus and of our brothers and sisters.

Draw Close to Your Spiritual Family

“I am ascending to my Father and your Father.”—JOHN 20:17.

JEHOVAH’S family of worshippers includes Jesus, who is “the firstborn of all creation,” and a multitude of angels. (Col. 1:15; Ps. 103:20) When Jesus was on earth, he indicated that faithful humans can view Jehovah as their Father. Speaking to his disciples, Jesus referred to Jehovah as “my Father and your Father.” (John 20:17) And when we dedicate ourselves to Jehovah and get baptized, we become part of a loving family of brothers and sisters. —Mark 10:29, 30.

² Some find it difficult to view Jehovah as a loving Father. Others may not know how to express love to their brothers and sisters. In this article, we will consider how Jesus helps us to view Jehovah as a loving Father, one to whom we can draw close. We will also identify ways that we can imitate Jehovah in how we treat our brothers and sisters.

JEHOVAH WANTS YOU TO DRAW CLOSE TO HIM

³ Jehovah is a loving Father. Jesus wants us to view Jehovah the way he does—as a warm and loving parent who is easy to approach, not as a cold authority figure. This is evident in what Jesus taught his disciples to pray for. He began the model prayer with the words: “Our Father.” (Matt. 6:9) Jesus could have directed us to call Jehovah “the Almighty,” “the Creator,” or “the King of eternity”—all of which are appropriate and Scriptural titles. (Gen.

1. What relationship can faithful humans have with Jehovah?
2. What will we consider in this article?
3. How does the model prayer draw us closer to Jehovah?

49:25; Isa. 40:28; 1 Tim. 1:17) However, Jesus used the intimate term “Father.”

⁴ Do you find it difficult to view Jehovah as a loving Father? Some of us do. We may find the idea of a loving parent hard to grasp because our upbringing was painful. How comforting it is to know that Jehovah completely understands our feelings! He wants to be close to us. That is why his Word urges us: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” (Jas. 4:8) Jehovah loves us, and he offers to be the best Father we could ever have.

⁵ Jesus can help us to draw closer to Jehovah. Jesus knows Jehovah so well and reflects His qualities so perfectly that he said: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father also.” (John 14:9) Like an older brother, Jesus teaches us how

4. How do we know that Jehovah wants us to draw close to him?

5. According to Luke 10:22, how can Jesus help us to draw closer to Jehovah?

to respect and obey our Father, how to avoid displeasing Him, and how to gain His approval. But Jesus’ life course on earth especially reveals how kind and loving Jehovah is. **(Read Luke 10:22.)** Let us consider some examples.

⁶ ***Jehovah listens to his children.*** Consider the way that Jehovah listened to his firstborn Son. Jehovah certainly heard many prayers offered by his Son when he was on earth. (Luke 5:16) He heard Jesus pray about weighty decisions, such as when he selected his 12 apostles. (Luke 6:12, 13) Jehovah also heard Jesus pray when he was in distress. Just before his betrayal, Jesus fervently prayed to his Father concerning the difficult test he was about to face. Jehovah not only heard Jesus’ prayer but also sent an angel to strengthen His dear Son.—Luke 22:41-44.

6. Give examples of how Jehovah listened to Jesus.



As a loving Father, Jehovah strengthened his Son by means of an angel
(See paragraph 6)

⁷ Today, Jehovah continues to listen to the prayers of his servants, and he answers them at the right time and in the best possible way. (Ps. 116:1, 2) Consider how a sister in India personally experienced this. She had been dealing with severe emotional problems, and she earnestly prayed to Jehovah about the matter. She writes: “The May 2019 JW Broadcasting® program about how to deal with worry and anxiety was just the right thing for me. It was an answer to my prayers.”

⁸ Jehovah loves us and cares for us, just as he loved Jesus and cared for him during his challenging earthly assignment. (John 5:20) He provided for all of Jesus’ spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. And Jehovah did not hold back from expressing love for and approval of his Son. (Matt. 3:16, 17) Because he could always count on his loving heavenly Father, Jesus never felt alone.—John 8:16.

⁹ Like Jesus, all of us have experienced many expressions of Jehovah’s love. Just think: Jehovah drew us to him and has given us a loving and united spiritual family to make us happy and to help fill our emotional needs. (John 6:44) Jehovah also provides us with a steady supply of upbuilding spiritual food. And he even helps us to care for our daily material needs. (Matt. 6:31, 32) As we reflect on Jehovah’s love for us, our love for him grows.

7. How should we feel knowing that Jehovah listens to our prayers?

8. In what ways did Jehovah show love for Jesus?

9. What evidence do we have that Jehovah loves us?

TREAT YOUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY THE WAY JEHOVAH DOES

¹⁰ Jehovah loves our brothers and sisters. But we may not always find it easy to feel and express love for members of our spiritual family. After all, we come from many different cultures and backgrounds. And we all make mistakes that can frustrate and disappoint others. Still, we can contribute to the love of our spiritual family. How? By imitating our Father in showing love to our brothers and sisters. (Eph. 5:1, 2; 1 John 4:19) Let us see what we can learn from Jehovah’s example.

¹¹ ***Jehovah shows “tender compassion.”*** (Luke 1:78) A compassionate person is concerned when he notices that people are suffering; he looks for ways to provide help and comfort. By the way he treated people, Jesus reflected Jehovah’s concern for them. (John 5:19) When seeing a crowd on one occasion, Jesus “felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matt. 9:36) Jesus’ compassion went beyond warm feelings. He cured the sick and offered refreshment to those who were “toiling and loaded down.”—Matt. 11:28-30; 14:14.

¹² Before we can show compassionate concern for our brothers and sisters, we need to consider what challenges they are facing. For example, a sister may have a serious health problem. She never

10. What can we learn from the way Jehovah treats our brothers and sisters?

11. How did Jesus reflect Jehovah’s “tender compassion”?

12. Give an example of how we can show compassion.



Imitate Jehovah by
being compassionate
and generous with your
brothers and sisters
(See paragraphs 12-14)

complains about it, but she would likely appreciate some practical help. How is she caring for the physical needs of her family? Would she welcome a little assistance with preparing meals or cleaning the house? A brother may have lost his job. Would a modest monetary gift, perhaps given anonymously, help tide him over until he finds another job?

¹³ **Jehovah is generous.** (Matt. 5:45) We should not wait until our brothers and sisters ask for our help before we show compassion. Like Jehovah, we can take the initiative. He makes the sun rise on us daily without our even asking for it! And the warmth of the sun sustains everyone, not just those who are thankful. Would you not agree that by providing for our needs, Jehovah is expressing his love for us? How we love Jehovah for being so kind and generous!

¹⁴ In imitation of their heavenly Father, many of our brothers and sisters

13-14. How can we be generous like Jehovah?

take the initiative in showing generosity. For example, in 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan caused tremendous destruction in the Philippines. A number of brothers and sisters lost their homes and possessions. But their spiritual family from around the world rallied to support them. Many contributed funds or participated in a massive construction effort, which resulted in repairing or rebuilding almost 750 homes in less than a year! During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Witnesses worked hard to support their brothers and sisters. When we are quick to support our spiritual family, we show them that we love them.

¹⁵ **Jehovah is merciful and forgiving.** (Read Luke 6:36.) We daily experience our heavenly Father's mercy. (Ps. 103:10-14) Jesus' followers were imperfect; yet, he showed them mercy and

15-16. According to Luke 6:36, what is an important way in which we can imitate our heavenly Father?

forgiveness. He was even willing to sacrifice his life so that our sins can be forgiven. (1 John 2:1, 2) Do you not feel drawn to Jehovah and Jesus because they are merciful and forgiving?

¹⁶ We strengthen the bond of love in our spiritual family when we are “freely forgiving.” (Eph. 4:32) Of course, forgiving others can be very hard at times, so we need to work at it. One sister felt that the *Watchtower* article “Forgive One Another Freely” helped her to do just that.* She writes: “Studying this article has given me a different, more positive perspective on the matter. It explained that being willing to forgive others does not mean that you approve of their wrong behavior or minimize the damage it causes. But forgiving does mean letting go of resentment for such wrongs and maintaining your own peace.” When we freely forgive our brothers and sisters, we show

* See *The Watchtower*, November 15, 2012, pp. 26-30.

that we love them and that we imitate our Father, Jehovah.

CHERISH YOUR PLACE IN THE FAMILY

¹⁷ It is a great privilege to belong to a loving international family. We want as many as possible to join us in worshipping our God. With this in mind, we should be careful never to do anything that would reflect badly on Jehovah’s people or on our heavenly Father. We try to conduct ourselves in a way that will attract people to the good news.—**Read Matthew 5:16.**

¹⁸ At times, some may belittle us or even persecute us because we obey our heavenly Father. What if we feel intimidated when speaking to others about our beliefs? We can count on Jehovah and his Son to come to our aid. Jesus reassured his disciples that they did not

17. According to Matthew 5:16, how can we honor our heavenly Father?

18. What can help us to give a fearless witness?

Young and old have shown loving interest in others in the brotherhood
(See paragraph 17)



have to worry about how to speak or what to say. Why not? “What you are to speak will be given you in that hour,” explained Jesus, “for the ones speaking are not just you, but it is the spirit of your Father that speaks by you.”—Matt. 10:19, 20.

¹⁹ Consider the example of Robert. Some time ago when he was a new Bible student with limited Bible knowledge, he appeared before a military court in South Africa. He boldly explained to the court that he wanted to remain neutral because of his love for his Christian brothers. He cherished his place in our spiritual family! “Who are your brothers?” the judge asked suddenly. Robert had not anticipated that question, but immediately the text for that day came to mind. It was Matthew 12:50: “Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, that one is my brother and sister and mother.” Even though Robert was a new Bible student, Jehovah’s spirit helped him to answer that question and a number of other unexpected questions. Jehovah must have been proud of

19. Give an example of someone who gave a bold witness.

Robert! And Jehovah is also proud of us when we rely on him to give a courageous witness in challenging situations.

²⁰ May we continue to treasure the blessing we have of belonging to a loving spiritual family. We have the best possible Father as well as many devoted brothers and sisters. We must never take these things for granted. Satan and his hateful followers try to make us doubt our heavenly Father’s love and try to disrupt the unity we enjoy. Jesus, however, prayed in our behalf, asking our Father to watch over us so that our family remains united. **(Read John 17:11, 15.)** Jehovah is answering that prayer. Like Jesus, may we never doubt the love and support of our heavenly Father. Let us be determined to continue drawing ever closer to our spiritual family.

20. What should we be determined to do? (John 17:11, 15)

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 21:** Jehovah sent an angel to strengthen Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. **Page 23:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, many worked to prepare and distribute provisions of food. **Page 24:** A mother supports her daughter, who is sending a letter of encouragement to a brother in prison.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What proves to you that Jehovah is a loving Father?
- What are some ways we can express love for our brothers and sisters?
- How do we show that we cherish our spiritual family?

SONG 102

“Assist Those
Who Are Weak”

PREVIEW

How distressing it is when a loved one leaves Jehovah! This article considers how our God feels when this happens. It discusses practical things faithful family members can do to cope with the pain and to remain spiritually strong. This article will also discuss how all in the congregation can offer comfort and support to the family.

When a Loved One Leaves Jehovah

“How often they . . . made him feel hurt.”—PS. 78:40.

HAS one of your loved ones been disfellowshipped from the congregation? That can be heartbreaking! “When my faithful spouse died after 41 years of marriage,” says a sister named Hilda, “I thought it was the worst thing I could ever experience.* But when my son left the congregation, his wife, and his children, it was far, far worse for me.”

² Think how heartbroken Jehovah must have been when members of his own angelic family turned their back on him! (Jude 6) And imagine how hurt he was at seeing his beloved people, the Israelites, rebel against him time and again. **(Read Psalm 78:40, 41.)** Be assured that our loving heavenly Father is also hurt when someone you love leaves him. He understands the grief you are experiencing. He will compassionately provide you with the encouragement and the support you need.

³ In this article, we will discuss what we can do to receive Jehovah’s help when we are coping with such a loss. We will also examine how we can help others in the congregation who are facing this challenge. But first, let us consider a negative pattern of thinking that we must avoid.

AVOID BLAMING YOURSELF

⁴ When a precious son or daughter leaves Jehovah, it is common for the parents to wonder what more they could

* Some names in this article have been changed.

1. How might the disfellowshipping of a loved one affect some?
- 2-3. According to Psalm 78:40, 41, how does Jehovah feel when his servants leave him?
4. How do many parents feel when a son or a daughter leaves Jehovah?

have done to help their young one stay in the truth. After his son was disfellowshipped, a brother named Luke admitted: “I blamed myself. I had nightmares about it. Sometimes I would cry and my heart ached.” Elizabeth, a sister who faced a similar situation, agonized: “What did I do wrong as a mother? I felt that I must have failed to inculcate the truth in my son.”

⁵ We need to remember that Jehovah has given each of us the gift of free will. This means that we can choose whether we will obey him or not. Some young ones whose upbringing was far from ideal choose to serve Jehovah, and they make a success of their service. Others whose parents did their very best to bring them up in harmony with Scriptural principles turn their back on the truth once they get older. In the final analysis, we must personally decide whether we will serve Jehovah. (Josh. 24:15) So, grieving parents, fight the tendency to think that this tragedy must be your fault!

⁶ At times, a parent abandons the truth and even the family. (Ps. 27:10) This can be devastating for children who had looked up to the parent as a role model. Esther, whose father was disfellowshipped, says: “I cried often because I realized that he was not just drifting away from the truth. He was making a deliberate choice to leave Jehovah altogether. I love my father, so when he was disfellowshipped, I constantly worried about his well-being. I even had panic attacks.”

5. Who is responsible when a person leaves Jehovah?

6. How might a young person be affected when a parent leaves God?



Jehovah understands how devastating the spiritual loss of a loved one can be
(See paragraphs 2-3)

⁷ Young ones, if one of your parents has been disfellowshipped, our heart aches for you! Please be assured that Jehovah is also keenly aware of your pain. He loves you and appreciates your loyalty, and so do we—your brothers and sisters. Remember, too, that you are *not* responsible for your parent’s decisions. As mentioned earlier, Jehovah has put a choice before every human. And each dedicated and baptized individual must “carry his own load of responsibility.” —Gal. 6:5, fn.

⁸ When someone you love leaves Jehovah, you understandably hold on to the hope that one day he will return to Him. What can you do in the meantime? You can look after your own spiritual health. By doing so, you will set a good example for other family members and perhaps even for the disfellowshipped one. You will also gain the needed strength to cope with your painful emotions. Let us discuss some practical steps you can take.

7. What are Jehovah’s feelings toward a young person whose parent is disfellowshipped?

8. What can faithful family members do while waiting for their loved one to return to Jehovah? (See also the box “Return to Jehovah.”)



Return to Jehovah

One mother says: “My hope for my disfellowshipped son is summed up in the words of Isaiah 55:7: ‘Let him return to Jehovah, who will have mercy on him, to our God, for he will forgive in a large way.’” If you have left Jehovah, the sooner you return, the happier you will be. As you look at world events, it becomes evident that Armageddon is swiftly approaching and can come at any time. Also, life in this system is short and uncertain. None of us can know if we will be alive tomorrow.—Jas. 4:13, 14.

The brochure *Return to Jehovah** says: “Be assured that Jehovah will be there for you as you return to him. He will help you to deal with anxiety, to resolve hurt feelings, and to find the peace of mind and heart that comes from having a clean conscience. Then you may once again feel moved to serve Jehovah along with fellow worshippers.”—1 Pet. 2:25.

* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available in many languages on jw.org.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STAY SPIRITUALLY STRONG

⁹ Stick to a good spiritual routine. It is vital that you continue strengthening yourself and other family members. How can you do so? Draw strength from Jehovah by maintaining a routine of reading God’s Word and meditating on it as well as attending Christian meetings. Joanna, whose father and sister left the truth, says: “I feel a calm come over me when I read about such Bible characters as Abigail, Esther, Job, Joseph, and Jesus. Their examples feed my heart and mind with positive thoughts that soothe the pain. I have also found our original songs to be very encouraging.”

¹⁰ Pour out your concerns to Jehovah. When you experience distressing feelings, do not stop praying to him. Beg our loving God to help you view the situation from his perspective and to “give you insight and instruct you in the way you should go.” (**Read Psalm 32:6-8.**) Of course, it may be very painful to tell Jehovah how you really feel. But Jehovah fully understands your pain of heart. He loves you very much and urges you to pour out your heart to him.—Ex. 34:6; Ps. 62:7, 8.

¹¹ Support the decision. Disfellowshipping is part of Jehovah’s arrangement. His loving correction is in the best inter-

9. In what ways can you draw strength from Jehovah? (See also the box “Comforting Scriptures if Your Loved One Has Left Jehovah.”)

10. What does Psalm 32:6-8 reveal about how to cope with distressing feelings?

11. According to Hebrews 12:11, why should we trust in Jehovah’s loving discipline? (See also the box “Disfellowshipping—Jehovah’s Loving Discipline at Work.”)

ests of everyone, including the wrongdoer. **(Read Hebrews 12:11.)** Any negative comments about the way a disciplinary matter was handled by the elders have likely been initiated by someone who did not mention details that would put the wrongdoer in a bad light. We simply do not have all the facts. It is wise, then, to trust that the elders who took judicial action made every effort to follow Scriptural principles and to judge “for Jehovah.” —2 Chron. 19:6.

¹² By supporting the elders’ decision to disfellowship your loved one, you may actually help him to return to Jehovah. “Severing family association with our adult son was extremely difficult,” admits Elizabeth, quoted earlier. “But after he returned to Jehovah, he admitted that he deserved to be disfellowshipped. In time, he expressed appreciation for the lessons he learned. I came to value Jehovah’s discipline,” she says. Her husband, Mark, adds: “Much later, our son told me that he wanted to come back in part because we did exactly what we had to do. I’m so glad Jehovah helped us to be obedient.”

¹³ Confide in understanding friends. Associate with mature Christians who can help you to maintain a positive attitude. (Prov. 12:25; 17:17) Joanna, mentioned earlier, says: “In my heart, I felt alone. But talking to trustworthy friends helped me to cope.” What, though, if it seems that some in the congregation say things to you that make you feel worse?

12. What benefits have some experienced because they supported Jehovah’s arrangement for discipline?

13. What can help you to deal with painful emotions?

Comforting Scriptures if Your Loved One Has Left Jehovah

- Psalm 30:10
- Psalm 34:4, 6, 18, 19
- Psalm 39:12
- Psalm 61:1, 2
- Psalm 94:17-19
- Ephesians 3:20
- Philippians 4:6, 7

¹⁴ Be patient with your brothers and sisters. Realistically, not everyone will respond in an ideal way. (Jas. 3:2) We are all imperfect, so do not be surprised if some struggle with what to say or even unintentionally make comments that cause you pain. Remember the apostle Paul’s admonition: “Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely even if anyone has a cause for complaint against another.” (Col. 3:13) One sister whose relative was disfellowshipped explains: “Jehovah has helped me to forgive brothers who tried to do the right thing in an imperfect way.” What can the congregation do to help faithful family members?

THE CONGREGATION CAN HELP

¹⁵ Warmly welcome faithful family members. A sister named Miriam admits that she was anxious about going to the meetings after her brother was

14. Why do we need to “continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely”?

15. What can help family members whose loved one was recently disfellowshipped?

Disfellowshipping—Jehovah’s Loving Discipline at Work

How does the disfellowshipping arrangement reflect God’s love?

1. Love motivates elders to make every effort to help wrongdoers. A Christian is disfellowshipped only if two factors coincide: He has committed a serious sin, and he is not repentant.—Heb. 12:7, 9-11.
2. Disfellowshipping protects the congregation. An unrepentant sinner is like a person who has a highly contagious viral infection and needs to be quarantined in order to protect others from getting sick.—1 Cor. 5:6, 7, 11-13.
3. Disfellowshipping may move a sinner to repent. Many who got disfellowshipped were jolted to their senses and in time returned to Jehovah.—Luke 15:11-24.
4. When a repentant wrongdoer returns, the heavens rejoice and the congregation welcomes him back.—Luke 15:7.

disfellowshipped. “I was afraid of what people would say. But there were wonderful friends who shared my sadness without showing resentment toward my disfellowshipped brother. Thanks to them, I did not feel alone in my grief.” Another sister recalls: “After our son was

disfellowshipped, dear friends came to comfort us. Some admitted that they did not know what to say. They shed a tear with me or wrote me a note. What they did helped me tremendously!”

¹⁶ Continue to support faithful family members. They need your love and encouragement now more than ever. (Heb. 10:24, 25) At times, family members of disfellowshipped ones have felt that they too have been excluded from association with the congregation. Do not let that happen! Young people whose parents have left the truth especially need commendation and encouragement. Maria, whose husband was disfellowshipped and left the family, says: “Some of my friends came to my house and cooked food and helped us with the family study. They felt my pain and cried with me. They defended me when false rumors circulated. They really lifted my spirits!”—Rom. 12:13, 15.

¹⁷ Elders, use opportunities available to strengthen faithful family members. You have a special responsibility to console fellow worshippers whose loved ones have left Jehovah. (1 Thess. 5:14) Take the initiative to encourage them before and after Christian meetings. Visit them and pray for them. Work with them in the ministry, or at times invite them to join you for family worship. Spiritual shepherds need to show Jehovah’s grieving sheep the compassion, love, and attention they need.—1 Thess. 2:7, 8.

16. How can the congregation provide ongoing support?

17. How can elders provide compassionate support?



The congregation can give loving support to faithful family members
(See paragraph 17)

REMAIN HOPEFUL AND CONTINUE TO TRUST IN JEHOVAH

¹⁸ Jehovah “does not desire anyone to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.” (**Read 2 Peter 3:9.**) Although a person may commit a serious sin, his life is still precious to God. Think of the high price Jehovah has paid—the ransom sacrifice of his own beloved Son—for the lives of sinners. Jehovah compassionately reaches out to help such ones return to him. He hopes they will choose to do so, as we can see from Jesus’ illustration of the lost son. (Luke 15:11-32) Many

18. According to 2 Peter 3:9, what does God desire for wrongdoers?

who left the truth returned later to their loving heavenly Father. And the congregation welcomed them with open arms. Elizabeth, quoted earlier, experienced the joy of seeing her son reinstated. Thinking back, she says, “I really appreciated those who encouraged us not to give up hope.”

¹⁹ We can always trust in Jehovah. He never gives us direction that will cause us harm. He is a generous and compassionate Father who has deep love for all who love and worship him. Be assured that Jehovah will not abandon you in your time of anguish. (Heb. 13:5, 6) “Jehovah never abandoned us,” says Mark, mentioned earlier. “He is never far from us when we go through difficulties.” Jehovah will continue to give you “the power beyond what is normal.” (2 Cor. 4:7) Yes, you *can* remain faithful and hopeful even when a loved one leaves Jehovah.

19. Why can we continue to trust in Jehovah?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 27:** When a brother abandons his family and Jehovah, his wife and their children suffer. **Page 31:** Two elders come to provide spiritual encouragement to a family in the congregation.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES?

■ Psalm 78:40, 41

■ Psalm 32:6-8

■ Hebrews 12:11

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COVER PICTURE:

God's people around the globe have happily shared in witnessing to others about God's Kingdom (See study article 37, paragraph 13)

Credit: Globe based on NASA/Visible Earth imagery

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