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

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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLE 1 PAGES 9-13

In a world that engenders a spirit of lightheartedness, Christians need to have a serious view of life. This is especially critical in our worship of Jehovah. This article will provide a balanced, Scriptural look at how serious we should be about our Christian responsibilities.

STUDY ARTICLE 2 PAGES 13-17

Many find it difficult to make decisions. This article will help us examine why it is vital that we learn how to make good decisions. It will also discuss practical steps we can take to ensure that the decisions we make will honor God.

STUDY ARTICLES 3, 4 PAGES 18-27

What is "the fruitage of the spirit"? How can we cultivate it? And why should we do so? You will find answers to these questions as we consider the nine aspects of the spirit's fruitage. These articles also include practical suggestions that many will find helpful.

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Do You Discern the Evidence of God's Guidance?



NEITHER the Israelites nor the Egyptians had seen anything like it before. As the Israelites made their Exodus from Egypt, a pillar of cloud hovered near them and stayed with them day in and day out. At night it became a pillar of fire. How awe-inspiring! But where did it come from? What was its purpose? And what can we, some 3,500 years later, learn from the way that Israel regarded “the pillar of fire and cloud”?—Ex. 14:24.

God's Word reveals the source and the purpose of the pillar, stating: “Jehovah was going ahead of them in the daytime in a pillar of cloud to lead them by the way, and in the nighttime in a pillar of fire to give them light to go in the daytime and nighttime.” (Ex. 13:21, 22) Jehovah God used the pillar of fire and cloud to guide his people out of Egypt and through the wilderness. They had to be ready to move in order to follow it. When the pursuing Egyptian forces were about to attack God's people, the pillar moved between the two groups, protecting the Israelites. (Ex. 14:19, 20) Though the pillar did not indicate the most direct route, following its lead was the only way for Israel to get to the Promised Land.

The presence of the pillar assured God's people that Jehovah was with them. It represented Jehovah, and at times he spoke out of it. (Num. 14:14; Ps. 99:7) Further, the cloud identified Moses as the one appointed by Jehovah to lead the nation. (Ex. 33:9) Likewise, the last recorded appearance of the cloud confirmed Jehovah's appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor. (Deut. 31:14, 15)

Indeed, the successful outcome of the Exodus depended on the Israelites' discerning the evidence of God's guidance and then following it.

They Lost Sight of the Evidence

When the Israelites saw that pillar for the first time, they must have been awestruck. Sadly, though, that constantly present miracle did not impress the Israelites enough to fill them with lasting confidence in Jehovah. They challenged God's guidance several times. When the Egyptian army pursued them, they showed no trust in Jehovah's saving power. Instead, they accused God's servant Moses of having led them toward their death. (Ex. 14:10-12) After their deliverance through the Red Sea, they murmured against Moses, Aaron, and Jehovah because of the presumed lack of food and water. (Ex. 15:22-24; 16:1-3; 17:1-3, 7) And some weeks after that, they pressured Aaron into making a golden calf. Just imagine! In one section of their camp, the Israelites saw the pillar of fire and cloud—the majestic evidence of the One who had led them out of Egypt—and not far from there, they began worshipping a lifeless idol, saying: “This is your God, O Israel, who led you up out of the land of Egypt.” What “great acts of disrespect”!—Ex. 32:4; Neh. 9:18.

Israel's rebellious acts demonstrated striking disregard for Jehovah's guidance. The problem was not with their physical sight but with their spiritual outlook. They saw the pillar, but they no longer appreciated

its meaning. Though their actions “pained even the Holy One of Israel,” Jehovah mercifully kept on providing guidance by means of the pillar until Israel reached the Promised Land.—Ps. 78:40-42, 52-54; Neh. 9:19.

See the Evidence of Divine Guidance Today

Similarly in modern times, Jehovah has never left his people without clear guidance. Just as he did not expect the Israelites to scout out their own route, we today are not asked to find the way into the promised new world on our own. Jesus Christ is the assigned Leader of the congregation. (Matt. 23:10; Eph. 5:23) He has delegated some authority to a faithful slave class, made up of faithful spirit-anointed Christians. That slave class, in turn, appoints overseers in the Christian congregation.—Matt. 24:45-47; Titus 1:5-9.

How can we be sure of the identity of that faithful slave, or steward, class? Notice how Jesus himself describes it: “Who really is the faithful steward, the discreet one, whom his master will appoint over his body of attendants to keep giving them their measure of food supplies at the proper time? Happy is that slave, if his master on arriving finds him doing so!”—Luke 12:42, 43.

Hence, the steward class is “*faithful*,” never betraying or abandoning Jehovah, Jesus, Bible truths, or God’s people. Being “*discreet*,” the steward class shows good judgment in directing the all-important work of preaching the “good news of the kingdom” and making “disciples of people of all the nations.” (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) “At the proper time,” the steward class obediently distributes spiritual food that is wholesome and nourishing. Jehovah’s approval is seen in how he blesses his people with increase, guidance in important decisions,

better comprehension of Bible truths, safeguards against annihilation at the hands of their enemies, and peace of mind and heart.—Isa. 54:17; Phil. 4:7.

Respond to God’s Guidance

How can we show that we appreciate God’s guidance? The apostle Paul said: “Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive.” (Heb. 13:17) Doing so may not always be easy. To illustrate: Put yourself in the place of an Israelite in Moses’ day. Imagine that after you have been walking for some time, the pillar comes to a halt. How long will it stay there? A day? A week? Several months? You wonder, ‘Is it worth unpacking all my possessions?’ First, you may unpack only the most necessary items. Yet, after a few days, frustrated at searching through your belongings, you begin to unpack everything. But then, just when you have about finished unpacking, you see the pillar lifting—and you have to start packing again! That would not be so easy or convenient. Still, the Israelites had to “pull away right afterward.”—Num. 9:17-22.

How, then, do we react when we receive divine direction? Do we try to apply it “right afterward”? Or do we continue doing things just as we have been accustomed to doing them? Are we familiar with up-to-date directions, such as those regarding conducting home Bible studies, preaching to foreign-speaking people, regularly sharing in family worship, cooperating with Hospital Liaison Committees, and conducting ourselves properly at conventions? We also show our appreciation for God’s guidance by accepting counsel. When faced with far-reaching decisions, we do not trust in our own wisdom but look to Jehovah and his organization for guidance. And just as a child seeks

*We are being guided
by Jehovah's organization
today*



Convention releases ▼



Theocratic schooling ▼



Training at meetings for service ▼



his parents' protection when a storm rages, we seek protection in Jehovah's organization when, like a thunderstorm, the problems of this world strike us.

Of course, those taking the lead in the earthly part of God's organization are not perfect—but neither was Moses. Even so, the pillar provided constant evidence of his divine appointment and of God's approval. Note, too, that it was not for each Israelite to determine when to start moving. Instead, the people acted “at the order of Jehovah by means of Moses.” (Num. 9:23) Thus Moses, God's channel of direction, likely gave the signal to move.

Today, Jehovah's steward class gives a clear signal whenever it is time to make a move. How does the steward do that? By means of articles in *The Watchtower* and *Our Kingdom Ministry*, new publications, and talks at assemblies and conventions. Instructions are also conveyed to the congregations

through traveling overseers or through letters or training sessions attended by brothers having congregation responsibilities.

Do you clearly discern the evidence of divine guidance? Jehovah uses his organization to guide us, his people, through “the wilderness” during these last days of Satan's wicked world. As a result, we enjoy unity, love, and security.

When Israel reached the Promised Land, Joshua said: “You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you.” (Josh. 23:14) Likewise, God's people today will without fail reach the promised new world. However, whether we personally will be there depends to no small degree on our humble willingness to follow God's direction. Therefore, may we all keep on discerning the evidence of Jehovah's guidance!

How to Remain Honest in a Dishonest World

LIKE the air we breathe, dishonesty is everywhere. People lie, overcharge, steal, do not repay debts, and boast of sharp business practices. Living in this environment, we are often faced with situations that test our determination to be honest. How can we keep on resisting the tendency toward dishonesty? Let us consider three key factors that will help us to do so. They are fear of Jehovah, a good conscience, and a sense of contentment.

A Healthy Fear of Jehovah

The prophet Isaiah wrote: “Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Statute-giver, Jehovah is our King.” (Isa. 33:22) Recognizing Jehovah’s position of authority results in godly fear—a driving force behind our determination to resist the spirit of dishonesty. Proverbs 16:6 states: “In the fear of Jehovah one turns away from bad.” Such fear is, not morbid dread of a vindictive God, but healthy concern over displeasing our heavenly Father, who is deeply interested in our welfare. —1 Pet. 3:12.

A true-life experience illustrates the positive effect of such healthy concern, or fear. Ricardo and his wife, Fernanda, withdrew the equivalent of seven hundred dollars (U.S.) from their bank account.* Fernanda put the stack of bills into her purse without counting it. On arriving home after having paid some bills, they were surprised to find almost the same amount that they had withdrawn still in Fernanda’s purse. “The bank

cashier must have overpaid us,” they concluded. At first, they were tempted to keep the money, since they had many other unpaid bills. Ricardo explains: “We prayed to Jehovah for strength to return the money. Our desire to please him in response to his appeal at Proverbs 27:11 made us want to return the money.”

A Bible-Trained Conscience

We can develop a sensitive conscience by studying the Bible and striving to put what we learn into practice. Thus ‘the word of God, which is alive and exerts power,’ will reach not only our minds but also our hearts. This will motivate us “to conduct ourselves honestly in all things.” —Heb. 4:12; 13:18.

Consider João’s case. He ran up a huge debt, equivalent to five thousand dollars (U.S.). Then, without paying his debt, he moved to another town. Eight years later, João learned the truth, and his Bible-trained conscience moved him to contact his creditor and pay off that debt! Because João has to support a wife and four children on a small income, the creditor agreed that he could pay back the amount in monthly installments.

A Sense of Contentment

The apostle Paul wrote: “It is a means of great gain, this godly devotion along with self-sufficiency. . . . Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things.” (1 Tim. 6:6-8) Taking this wise counsel to heart will help us to

* Some names have been changed.



*A healthy fear of Jehovah strengthens
our resolve to be honest*



avoid being ensnared in greedy, questionable business practices or in unrealistic get-rich-quick schemes. (Prov. 28:20) Following Paul's counsel will also help us to put God's Kingdom first, confident that our basic necessities will be supplied.—Matt. 6:25-34.

However, because of “the deceptive power of riches,” we should never underestimate the danger of being overcome by greed and covetousness. (Matt. 13:22) Recall the case of the man Achan. He had witnessed the Israelites' miraculous crossing of the Jordan River. Even so, overcome by greed, he did not resist the desire to steal some silver and gold and an expensive garment from the spoils of the city of Jericho. That act cost him his life. (Josh. 7:1, 20-26) No wonder that centuries later, Jesus warned: “Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness”!—Luke 12:15.

Be Honest at the Workplace

Let us now consider some circumstances that can test our determination to remain honest in all things. Being honest at our workplace includes “not committing theft”—even if doing so is the supposed norm. (Titus 2:9, 10) Jurandir, who works at a government agency, was honest when reporting

his travel expenses. His colleagues, though, claimed more than they had spent. They could do so because the head of the department covered for the dishonest workers. In fact, that same person reprimanded Jurandir for being honest and stopped sending him on business trips. In time, however, the agency was audited, and Jurandir was commended for his honesty. He also received a promotion.

André, a salesman, was told by his employer to charge the same service fee twice to customers' accounts. Our brother prayed to Jehovah for courage to adhere to Bible principles. (Ps. 145:18-20) He also tried to explain to his employer why he could not follow his instructions—but to no avail. So André decided to quit this well-paying job. However, about a year later, his former employer called him back to work, assuring him that the customers were no longer being overcharged. André was promoted to manager.

Pay Back Debts

The apostle Paul advised Christians: “Do not you people be owing anybody a single thing.” (Rom. 13:8) We might try to justify not repaying a debt, assuming that the creditor is well-off and does not need the money.

The Bible, however, warns: “The wicked one is borrowing and does not pay back.”—Ps. 37:21.

What, though, if an “unforeseen occurrence” prevents us from paying back what we owe? (Eccl. 9:11) Francisco borrowed the equivalent of seven thousand dollars (U.S.) from Alfredo to pay off his mortgage. But because of some business setbacks, Francisco was unable to pay his debt on the set date. He took the initiative to approach Alfredo to discuss the matter, and Alfredo agreed to be repaid in several installments.

Avoid Giving a False Impression

Recall the bad example of Ananias and Sapphira, a couple in the first-century Christian congregation. Having sold a field, they brought only part of the proceeds to the apostles and claimed that it was the entire amount of the sale. They wanted to impress others with their inflated generosity. The apostle Peter, however, under the inspiration of God’s holy spirit, unmasked their deceit, and they were struck dead by Jehovah.—Acts 5:1-11.

In contrast with dishonest Ananias and Sapphira, the Bible writers were candid and honest. Moses honestly reported his loss of temper that resulted in his being barred from entering the Promised Land. (Num. 20:7-13) Similarly, Jonah did not cover up the weaknesses that he manifested before and after preaching to the Ninevites. Instead, he recorded them.—Jonah 1:1-3; 4:1-3.

Certainly, courage is needed to tell the truth even if that costs you something, as is illustrated by what happened to 14-year-old Nathalia at school. She reviewed a written exam she had taken and noticed that one of



the answers her teacher marked as correct was actually wrong. Although she knew that this would adversely affect her grades, Nathalia did not hesitate to tell her teacher. “My parents have always taught me that to please Jehovah, I must be honest. My conscience would have troubled me if I had not informed my teacher,” she said. The teacher appreciated Nathalia’s honesty.

Honesty—A Quality That Brings Honor to Jehovah

Giselle, a 17-year-old girl, found a wallet with documents and the equivalent of \$35 (U.S.). She made arrangements through the school authorities to have the wallet returned to its owner. A month later, the school vice-principal read a letter to the whole class praising Giselle for her honesty and commending her family for her good training and religious upbringing. Her “fine works” gave glory to Jehovah.—Matt. 5:14-16.

It takes effort to be honest while living amid those who are ‘lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, and disloyal.’ (2 Tim. 3:2) Nevertheless, a healthy fear of Jehovah, a Bible-trained conscience, and a sense of contentment help us to remain honest in a dishonest world. We also cultivate an ever closer friendship with Jehovah, who ‘is righteous and loves righteous acts.’—Ps. 11:7.

SERVING JEHOVAH WITH ALL SERIOUSNESS

*“Whatever things are of serious concern, . . .
continue considering these things.”—PHIL. 4:8.*

WE LIVE in a world that is experiencing some of the most difficult and tragic times in human history. For people who do not have a sound spiritual foundation, coping with these “critical times hard to deal with” can be nearly impossible. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Only their own fortitude gets them through each day—with limited success. In an effort to avoid taking life too seriously, many turn to the constant flow of amusements of the entertainment world.

² To cope with the stresses of life, people often put the desire for pleasures in first place. If not careful, Christians could easily get caught up in this way of living. How can we avoid that? Would it require that we be serious all the time? How do we strike a balance between pleasures and responsibilities? What Scriptural principles should guide us, so that while we are sober about life, we do not take ourselves too seriously?

Being Serious in a World That Loves Pleasure

³ Needless to say, this world places undue importance on ‘love of pleasure.’ (2 Tim. 3:4) Its emphasis on having a good time can be a threat to our spirituality. (Prov. 21:17) Thus, for good reason the apostle Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus also include counsel regarding the subject of seriousness.

1, 2. What has caused many in this world to have a frivolous view of life, prompting what questions?

3, 4. How do the Scriptures help us to value the need for being serious?

Applying that counsel will help us to counteract the world’s frivolous view of life. —**Read 1 Timothy 2:1, 2; Titus 2:2-8.**

⁴ Centuries earlier, Solomon wrote about the value of forgoing pleasures at times in order to take life seriously. (Eccl. 3:4; 7:2-4) Indeed, because of the shortness of life, we need to ‘exert ourselves vigorously’ to attain salvation. (Luke 13:24) To that end, we need to keep considering all the things that are of “serious concern.” (Phil. 4:8, 9) That means giving careful attention to every facet of Christian life.

⁵ For example, in imitation of Jehovah and Jesus, Christians take seriously their responsibility to work hard. (John 5:17) As a result, they are often praised for their good work ethic and dependability. Especially are family heads concerned about working hard to support their families. After all, not providing materially for one’s household is tantamount to having “disowned Jehovah!” —1 Tim. 5:8, ftn.

A Serious yet Joyful View of Our Worship

⁶ Jehovah has never taken true worship lightly. As an example, under the Mosaic Law, the Israelites experienced severe consequences when they veered from their worship of Jehovah. (Josh. 23:12, 13) In the first

5. What is one area of life that we should take seriously?

6. How do we know that we should take seriously our worship of Jehovah?

century C.E., Christ's followers needed to put up a vigorous fight to keep true worship free of corrupt teachings and attitudes. (2 John 7-11; Rev. 2:14-16) Today, true Christians continue to take their worship seriously.—1 Tim. 6:20.

⁷ Our field ministry is a source of joy. However, in order to maintain joy in the ministry, we need to give it serious thought and advance preparation. Paul explained how he took into consideration the people he taught. He wrote: "I have become all things to people of all sorts, that I might by all means save some. But I do all things for the sake of the good news, that I may become a sharer of it with others." (1 Cor. 9:22, 23) Paul found pleasure in helping people spiritually, and he gave serious thought to how he would provide for the specific needs of his listeners. Thus, he was able to give them encouragement and incentive to worship Jehovah.

⁸ How serious was Paul about his ministry? He was willing to "slave" both for Jehovah and for those who would listen to the message of truth. (Rom. 12:11; 1 Cor. 9:19) When we take on the responsibility to teach people God's Word—either during a home Bible study, a Christian meeting, or a Family Worship session—do we sense our responsibility toward those we are teaching? Perhaps we feel that conducting a regular Bible study is too much of a burden for us to take on. Granted, it usually calls for taking time from our personal pursuits and devoting that time to helping others. But is that not in the spirit of Jesus' words that "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving"? (Acts 20:35) Personally teaching oth-

ers the way to salvation will bring us happiness that cannot be compared with any other activity.

⁹ Being serious does not mean that we cannot have a relaxing and enjoyable time with people. Jesus set the perfect example of taking time not only to teach but also to relax and develop meaningful relationships with others. (Luke 5:27-29; John 12:1, 2) Being serious also does not mean that we should always have an appearance of severity. Had Jesus had a stern, overly serious nature, people certainly would not have been drawn to him. Even children were comfortable with him. (Mark 10:13-16) How can we imitate Jesus' balanced manner?

¹⁰ Referring to an elder, one brother stated, "He expects much from himself but never expects perfection from others." Can that be said of you? It is proper to have some reasonable expectations of others. For example, children respond well when parents set reasonable goals and help the children to reach them. Similarly, elders may encourage individuals in the congregation to grow spiritually and offer them specific suggestions on how to do so. Furthermore, when an elder has a balanced view of himself, he will have a warm and refreshing manner. (Rom. 12:3) One sister said: "I don't want an elder to take everything as a joke. But if he is serious all the time, it is difficult to approach him." Another said that she feels that some elders "can be very intimidating because they have an extremely serious nature." Never would elders want to diminish the joyful view that all believers should have of their worship of Jehovah, "the happy God."—1 Tim. 1:11.

7. How did Paul prepare for his ministry?

8. (a) What should be our attitude toward the people we teach in our ministry? (b) How may conducting a Bible study contribute to a joyful ministry?

9, 10. (a) Does being serious mean that we cannot relax and enjoy spending time with people? Explain. (b) What will help an elder to be encouraging and approachable?

Taking On Responsibility in the Congregation

¹¹ When Paul encouraged the men in the congregation to strive to qualify for greater responsibility, his intention was not to encourage anyone to satisfy personal ambition. Instead, he wrote: “If any man is reaching out for an office of overseer, he is desirous of a *fine work*.” (1 Tim. 3:1, 4) “Reaching out” requires of Christian men that they develop a strong desire to work hard at acquiring needed spiritual qualities in order to serve their brothers. If a brother has been baptized at least one year and to a reasonable degree meets the Scriptural qualifications for ministerial servants outlined at 1 Timothy 3:8-13, he can be recommended for appointment. Note that verse 8 specifically states: “Ministerial servants should likewise *be serious*.”

¹² Are you a serious baptized brother in your late teens? There are several ways that you can reach out. One is by improving your personal share in the field ministry. Are you the sort who enjoys working with brothers of all age groups in the field service? Are you trying to find someone with whom you can study the Bible? When you conduct a Bible study according to the suggestions given at Christian meetings, you will improve your teaching ability. Moreover, you will learn to have empathy for the one learning Jehovah’s ways. As your student begins to see the need for making changes, you will learn—patiently and discreetly—to help him to apply Bible principles.

¹³ You young brothers can make yourselves available to older ones in the congregation, offering to assist them in any way

11. What does it mean to be “reaching out” in the congregation?

12, 13. Describe ways young brothers may reach out for responsibility.

possible. You can also show an interest in the appearance of the Kingdom Hall, helping to keep it clean and neat. When you offer to help out in any way you can, your willing spirit gives evidence that you are serious about your ministry. Like Timothy, you can learn to care genuinely for the needs of the congregation.—***Read Philippians 2:19-22.***

¹⁴ Elders, be conscious of putting to work young brothers who are endeavoring to “flee from the desires incidental to youth” and who are pursuing “righteousness, faith, love, peace,” along with other serious traits. (2 Tim. 2:22) By assigning them things to do in the congregation, they can be “tested as to fitness” to shoulder responsibility, so that their “advancement may be manifest to all persons.”—1 Tim. 3:10; 4:15.

Demonstrating Seriousness in the Congregation and the Family

¹⁵ Seriousness includes according our brothers and sisters dignity. In his counsel to Timothy, Paul addressed the need to view others with respect. (***Read 1 Timothy 5:1, 2.***) This is especially important when

14. How can young brothers be “tested as to fitness” to serve in the congregation?

15. According to 1 Timothy 5:1, 2, how may we show seriousness in our view of others?

How Would You Answer?

- Why should we counteract the world’s frivolous view of life?
- How can we be joyful yet serious about our ministry?
- How does our view of taking on responsibility show whether we are serious or not?
- Explain why dignifying our brothers and family members is a serious matter.

dealing with those of the opposite sex. Job's example of dignifying women, especially his marriage mate, is worthy of imitation. He made a conscious effort to keep from gazing lustfully at another woman. (Job 31:1) Taking our brothers and sisters seriously would rule out flirting with them or doing anything that would make a brother or a sister feel uncomfortable around us. Dignifying others is especially important when two people are pursuing a romantic relationship with marriage in mind. A serious Christian would never toy with the emotions of one of the opposite sex.—Prov. 12:22.

¹⁶ We also need to be careful to maintain a serious view of our God-given roles in the family. Satan's world is making a mockery of the role of husband and father. The entertainment industry takes pleasure in reducing the family head to a mere subject of ridicule and disrespect. However, the Scriptures place a great deal of responsibility on the husband, assigning him as "head of his wife."—Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3.

¹⁷ A husband may provide materially for his family. But if he does not provide spiritu-

16. Contrast the view some in the world have of the role of husband and father with how the Bible describes his role.

17. Explain how our participation in family worship can show that we are serious about our responsibilities.

al direction, he would be displaying a lack of discretion and wisdom. (Deut. 6:6, 7) Thus, 1 Timothy 3:4 says that if you are the head of a family and are reaching out for extra privileges in the congregation, you must be a man who is "presiding over his own household in a fine manner, having children in subjection *with all seriousness*." In this regard, ask yourself, 'Do I regularly set aside time for family worship in my household?' Some Christian wives virtually have to beg their husbands to take the lead spiritually. Each husband should take a serious look at his own view of this responsibility. Of course, a Christian wife should be supporting the Family Worship arrangement and be cooperating with her husband to make it a success.

¹⁸ Children are also encouraged to take life seriously. (Eccl. 12:1) There is no harm in young children learning to work hard, doing chores in the home that are reasonable for their age and abilities. (Lam. 3:27) When King David was still a young boy, he learned to be a fine shepherd. He also learned to be a musician and a composer—skills that led him to serve before the ruler of Israel. (1 Sam. 16:11, 12, 18-21) No doubt, as a lad David knew how to be playful, but he also learned valuable skills that he later used

18. How may children learn to be serious?



A husband must provide both materially and spiritually for his family



to praise Jehovah. His skills as a shepherd helped him to lead the nation of Israel patiently. You young people, how many useful skills are you learning—skills that will help you to serve your Creator and prepare you for future responsibilities?

Keeping a Balanced View

¹⁹ We can all strive to keep a balanced view of ourselves—not taking ourselves too seriously. We would not want to become “righteous overmuch.” (Eccl. 7:16) Some levity can break tense moments, whether in the home, at work, or when dealing with our Christian brothers and sisters. Family

19, 20. What balanced attitude are you determined to maintain toward yourself and your worship?

members will want to be careful about being overly critical so that they do not erode the safe haven of peace that a home should be. In the congregation, all can learn to laugh with and enjoy one another, keeping conversations and our teaching manner upbuilding and positive.—2 Cor. 13:10; Eph. 4:29.

²⁰ We live in a world that does not take Jehovah or his laws seriously. In contrast, Jehovah’s people are very concerned about their obedience and loyalty to their God. What a pleasure it is to be part of such a large association of people who worship Jehovah “with all seriousness”! May we be determined to maintain a serious view of our life and worship.

MAKE DECISIONS THAT HONOR GOD

“The shrewd one considers his steps.”—PROV. 14:15.

WE LIKELY make dozens of them each day. Many are of little lasting consequence. Some, though, can have a profound impact on our lives. What are they? Decisions. In all the decisions that we make, big or small, our primary concern is to honor God.—**Read 1 Corinthians 10:31.**

² Do you find it easy to make decisions, or is it a challenge for you to do so? If we are to progress to Christian maturity, we must learn to distinguish right from wrong and then make decisions that reflect our

1, 2. (a) What should be our primary concern in all the decisions that we make? (b) What questions will we consider?

own convictions, not those of someone else. (Rom. 12:1, 2; Heb. 5:14) What are some other compelling reasons why we need to learn to make good decisions? Why is it sometimes so difficult to make them? And what steps can we take to make sure that the decisions we make honor God?

Why Make Decisions at All?

³ If we are indecisive when Bible standards are involved, our schoolmates or workmates may conclude that we are not really convinced of our beliefs and therefore are easily

3. What should we not allow to interfere with our decision-making process?

influenced. They may lie, cheat, or steal and then try to persuade us to “follow after the crowd” by joining them or at least by covering up for them. (Ex. 23:2) However, a person who knows how to make decisions that honor God will not permit fear or a desire for acceptance to cause him to behave in a way that conflicts with his Bible-trained conscience.—Rom. 13:5.

⁴ Not all who want to make decisions for us mean us harm. Well-intentioned friends might insist that we follow their advice. If we are living away from home, our relatives likely still have deep concern for our well-being and may feel compelled to continue to involve themselves in important decisions we face. For instance, consider the matter of medical treatment. The Bible clearly condemns the misuse of blood. (Acts 15:28, 29) Other matters that have to do with health care, though, are not clear-cut and require that each of us make a personal decision as to what treatment we will accept or reject.* Our loved ones may have strong opinions on these issues. However, when deciding about those matters, each dedicated baptized Christian needs to carry “his own load” of responsibility. (Gal. 6:4, 5) Our primary concern is to maintain a good conscience before God, not men.—1 Tim. 1:5.

⁵ Indecision can place us in grave danger. The disciple James wrote that an indecisive person is “unsteady in all his ways.” (Jas. 1:8) Like a man in a rudderless boat on a stormy sea, he will be tossed about by shifting human opinion. How easy it would be for such

* For a discussion of this subject, see the insert “How Do I View Blood Fractions and Medical Procedures Involving My Own Blood?” published in *Our Kingdom Ministry* of November 2006, pages 3-6.

4. Why might others want to make decisions for us?

5. How can we avoid suffering shipwreck of our faith?

a person to suffer shipwreck of his faith and then blame others for his sad situation! (1 Tim. 1:19) How can we avoid that outcome? We must become “stabilized in the faith.” (***Read Colossians 2:6, 7.***) To achieve stability, we need to learn to make decisions that reflect our faith in God’s inspired Word. (2 Tim. 3:14-17) What, though, may hinder our ability to make good decisions?

Why Decisions Can Be Difficult to Make

⁶ Fear may paralyze us—fear of making the wrong decision, fear of failure, or fear of appearing foolish to others. Those concerns are understandable. Nobody wants to make a poor decision, one that causes trouble and possibly shame. Even so, love of God and his Word can help us shrink our fears. In what ways? Love of God will motivate us always to consult his Word and Bible-based publications *before* we make important decisions. We will thus minimize the number of mistakes we make. Why? Because the Bible can “give to the inexperienced ones shrewdness, to a young man knowledge and thinking ability.”—Prov. 1:4.

⁷ Will we always make the right decision? No. All of us make mistakes. (Rom. 3:23) King David, for example, was a wise and faithful man. Yet, he at times made poor decisions that caused suffering to himself and others. (2 Sam. 12:9-12) Nevertheless, David did not let his mistakes undermine his ability to make decisions that had God’s favor. (1 Ki. 15:4, 5) We can be decisive despite past mistakes if, like David, we remember that Jehovah will overlook our errors and forgive our sins. He will continue to support those who love and obey him.—Ps. 51:1-4, 7-10.

6. How might fear affect us?

7. King David’s example can teach us what?



*An indecisive person is like a man
in a rudderless boat on a stormy sea*

⁸ We can lessen the anxiety we feel about making decisions. How? By realizing that sometimes there are several correct paths to choose from. Consider the way the apostle Paul reasoned on the subject of marriage. Under inspiration he wrote: “If anyone thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virginity, if that is past the bloom of youth, and this is the way it should take place, let him do what he wants; he does not sin. Let them marry. But if anyone stands settled in his heart, having no necessity, but has authority over his own will and has made this decision in his own heart, to keep his own virginity, he will do well.” (1 Cor. 7:36-38) Paul recommended singleness as the best course, but it was not the only right option.

⁹ Should we be concerned with how others view the decisions that we make? To some degree. Note what Paul said on the matter of eating foods that might seem to

have been sacrificed to idols. He acknowledged that a decision may not in itself be wrong, yet it could cause harm to someone with a weak conscience. What was Paul’s resolve? “If food makes my brother stumble,” he wrote, “I will never again eat flesh at all, that I may not make my brother stumble.” (1 Cor. 8:4-13) We too need to consider how our decisions will affect the consciences of others. Of course, our main concern is the effect that our choices will have on our friendship with Jehovah. (**Read Romans 14:1-4.**) What Bible principles will help us to make decisions that honor God?

Six Steps to Making Good Decisions

¹⁰ *Avoid being presumptuous.* Before choosing a course of action, we need to ask ourselves, ‘Is this my decision to make?’ King Solomon wrote: “Has presumptuousness come? Then dishonor will come; but wisdom is with the modest ones.” —Prov. 11:2.

¹¹ Parents may grant their children the opportunity to make some decisions, but children should not just assume such authority. (Col. 3:20) Wives and mothers have a measure of authority within the family but do well to recognize the headship of their husbands. (Prov. 1:8; 31:10-18; Eph. 5:23) Likewise, husbands need to recognize that their authority is limited and that they are subject to Christ. (1 Cor. 11:3) Elders make decisions that affect the congregation. However, they make sure that they “do not go beyond the things that are written” in God’s Word. (1 Cor. 4:6) They also follow closely the direction they receive from the faithful slave. (Matt. 24:45-47) We can save ourselves and others much anxiety and grief if we

8. What do we learn from the apostle Paul’s comments about marriage?

9. Should we be concerned about how others view our decisions? Explain.

10, 11. (a) How can we avoid being presumptuous within the family? (b) What should elders keep in mind when making decisions that affect the congregation?

modestly make decisions only when we have been granted the authority to do so.

¹² *Do research.* “The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage,” wrote Solomon, “but everyone that is hasty surely heads for want.” (Prov. 21:5) For example, are you considering a business proposal? Do not let emotion rule. Gather all the relevant facts, seek the counsel of those familiar with such things, and determine what Bible principles have a bearing on the matter. (Prov. 20:18) To organize your research, prepare two lists—one detailing the benefits, the other the liabilities. Before you make a decision, “calculate the expense.” (Luke 14:28) Consider the potential impact that your decision will have not only on your financial health but also on your spiritual well-being. It takes time and effort to do research. But by doing so, you may avoid making hasty decisions that lead to unnecessary anxiety.

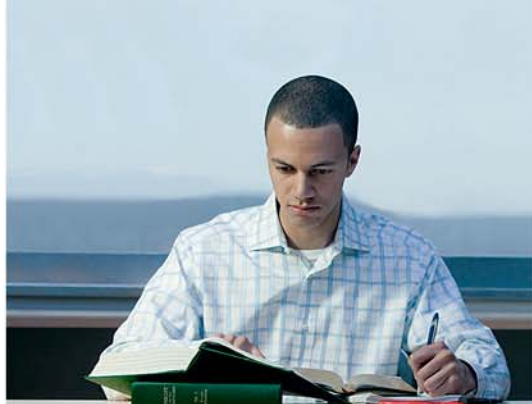
¹³ *Pray for wisdom.* Our decisions will honor God only if we invite him to help us in making them. The disciple James wrote: “If any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him.” (Jas. 1:5) There is no shame in admitting that we need God’s wisdom to help us make decisions. (Prov. 3:5, 6) After all, relying purely on our own understanding can easily misguide us. When we pray for wisdom and search out the principles in God’s Word, we allow holy spirit to help us discern our real motives for wanting to take a certain course of action.—Heb. 4:12; **read James 1:22-25.**

¹⁴ *Make the decision.* Do not rush straight

12. (a) Why should we do research? (b) Explain how a person could do such research.

13. (a) What assurance is found at James 1:5? (b) How can praying for wisdom help us?

14. Why should we avoid procrastination?



Steps to Making Good Decisions

- 1 Avoid Being Presumptuous
- 2 Do Research
- 3 Pray for Wisdom
- 4 Make the Decision
- 5 Implement the Decision
- 6 Review and Adjust

to this step before doing research and praying for wisdom. A wise person takes time to ‘consider his steps.’ (Prov. 14:15) On the other hand, do not procrastinate. A procrastinator may come up with outlandish excuses for not taking action. (Prov. 22:13) But he still makes a decision—he decides, in effect, to let others control his life.

¹⁵ *Implement the decision.* The effort we expend to make a good decision can be wasted if we do not follow through and vigorously implement it. “All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power,” wrote Solomon. (Eccl. 9:10) To succeed, we must be willing to allocate the resources needed to implement our decisions. For example,

15, 16. What is involved in implementing a decision?

a congregation publisher might decide to pioneer. Will he succeed? He likely will if he does not allow excessive secular work and recreation to sap his strength and rob him of the time he needs to take care of his ministry.

¹⁶ The best decisions are seldom the easiest to implement. Why? Because “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) We must wrestle against “the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12) Both the apostle Paul and the disciple Jude indicated that those who decide to honor God will have a fight on their hands.—1 Tim. 6:12; Jude 3.

¹⁷ *Review the decision and make adjustments if needed.* Not all decisions work out exactly as planned. “Time and unforeseen occurrence” befall us all. (Eccl. 9:11) Even so, Jehovah expects us to persevere with some decisions though we may encounter trials. A person’s decision to dedicate his life to Jehovah or to make a marriage vow is not negotiable. God expects us to live up to such decisions. (**Read Psalm 15:1, 2, 4.**) Most decisions, though, are less weighty. A wise person will from time to time review the decisions he has made. He will not let pride or stubbornness prevent him from adjusting or even reversing a decision. (Prov. 16:18) His prime concern is to make sure that his life course continues to honor God.

Train Others to Make Decisions That Honor God

¹⁸ Parents can do much to help their children learn how to make decisions that honor God. A fine example is one of the

17. When it comes to the decisions that we make, what does Jehovah expect of us?

18. How can parents train their children to make good decisions?

best teachers. (Luke 6:40) When appropriate, parents can explain to their children which steps they themselves took to make a certain decision. They may also want to allow their children to make some decisions for themselves and then commend them when the decision works out well. What, though, if a child makes a poor decision? A parent’s first inclination may be to shield the child from the consequences, but doing so may not always be in the child’s best interests. For example, the parent may allow the child to obtain a driver’s license. Suppose the child were to break a traffic law and receive a fine. The parent could pay the fine. However, if the child is required to work to pay off the fine, he is more likely to learn to be responsible for his actions.—Rom. 13:4.

¹⁹ Jesus told his followers to teach others. (Matt. 28:20) One of the most important lessons we can teach Bible students is how to make good decisions. To do so effectively, we must resist the urge to tell them how to act. It is much better for us to teach them to reason on Bible principles so that they can decide for themselves how to act. After all, “each of us will render an account for himself to God.” (Rom. 14:12) All of us, therefore, have compelling reason for making decisions that honor God.

19. What should we teach our Bible students, and how can we do so?

How Would You Answer?

- Why do we need to learn how to make decisions?
- How might fear affect us, and how can we overcome our fears?
- What six steps can we take to make sure that our decisions honor God?

“THE FRUITAGE OF THE SPIRIT” GLORIFIES GOD

“My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit.”—JOHN 15:8.

CONSIDER two scenarios: A Christian woman notices that a younger sister seems preoccupied. She makes arrangements to work with her in field service. As they are conversing between doors, the younger sister begins sharing what is troubling her. Later that day in prayer, the younger woman thanks Jehovah for the loving interest of the mature sister; it was just what she needed. In another place, a couple has recently returned from preaching in a foreign land. At a gathering, as they excitedly relate experiences, a young brother is quietly listening. Some years later, as he is preparing to leave for his own foreign assignment, he thinks of that couple and the conversation that made him want to be a missionary.

² Perhaps those situations remind you of someone who made a difference in your life or of someone whose life you touched. Of course, rarely does a single conversation change someone's life, but each day, we have opportunities to encourage and strengthen others. Imagine that there was something that would enhance your abilities and attributes, making them more beneficial to your brothers and more useful to God. Would that not be wonderful? Actually, Jehovah gives us just such a gift—his holy spirit. (Luke 11:13) As God's spirit operates in our life, it produces in us beautiful quali-

1, 2. (a) What opportunities do we have to encourage others? (b) What gift from Jehovah enhances our ability to serve him?

ties that enhance every aspect of our service to God. What a marvelous gift!—**Read Galatians 5:22, 23.**

³ The qualities that holy spirit produces are a reflection of the very personality of the Source of that spirit, Jehovah God. (Col. 3: 9, 10) Jesus indicated the foremost reason why Christians should strive to imitate God when he told his apostles: “My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit.”* (John 15:8) As we cultivate “the fruitage of the spirit,” the results are plain to see in the way we speak and act; this, in turn, brings praise to our God. (Matt. 5:16) In what ways is the spirit's fruitage different from the traits of Satan's world? How can we cultivate the fruitage of the spirit? Why may we find it a challenge to do so? We will consider these questions as we discuss the first three aspects of the spirit's fruitage—love, joy, and peace.

Love Based on a Higher Principle

⁴ The love produced by holy spirit is markedly different from the sort of love that is common in the world. How so? It is based on a higher principle. Jesus highlighted this

* The fruit Jesus mentioned includes both “the fruitage of the spirit” and “the fruit of lips” that Christians offer to God by means of the Kingdom-preaching work.—Heb. 13:15.

3. (a) How does our cultivating “the fruitage of the spirit” glorify God? (b) What questions will we consider?

4. What kind of love did Jesus teach his followers to practice?

difference in the Sermon on the Mount. (**Read Matthew 5:43-48.**) He noted that even sinners will follow a policy of like for like, treating others as others treat them. Such “love” does not involve real sacrifice but amounts to an exchange of favors. If we want to ‘prove ourselves sons of our Father who is in the heavens,’ we must be different. Rather than treating others as they treat us, we are to view and treat others as Jehovah views and treats them. How, though, is it possible to love our enemies, as Jesus commanded?

⁵ Consider one Bible example. While preaching in Philippi, Paul and Silas were arrested, severely beaten, and thrown into the inner prison, where their feet were secured in stocks. In the process, they may well have been mistreated by the jailer also. When they were unexpectedly freed as a result of an earthquake, did they relish the prospect of getting even with that man? No. Their sincere concern for his welfare—their self-sacrificing love—moved them to act swiftly in his behalf, opening the way for the jailer and his entire household to become believ-

5. How can we show love for those who persecute us?

ers. (Acts 16:19-34) Many of our brothers in modern times have similarly followed a course of “blessing those who persecute.” —Rom. 12:14.

⁶ Our love for fellow believers goes further. “We are under obligation to surrender our souls for our brothers.” (**Read 1 John 3:16-18.**) More often, though, we can show love in smaller ways. For example, if we say or do something that offends a brother, we can demonstrate love by taking the initiative to restore peace. (Matt. 5:23, 24) What if someone offends us? Are we “ready to forgive,” or are we sometimes inclined to hold a grudge? (Ps. 86:5) The intense love produced by holy spirit can help us to cover over minor transgressions, freely forgiving others “even as Jehovah freely forgave” us. —Col. 3:13, 14; 1 Pet. 4:8.

⁷ How can we cultivate self-sacrificing love for our brothers? By deepening our love for God. (Eph. 5:1, 2; 1 John 4:9-11, 20, 21) The intimate moments we spend with

6. In what ways can we show self-sacrificing love for our brothers? (See box on page 21.)

7, 8. (a) How is love for people linked with love for God? (b) How can we deepen our love for Jehovah? (See illustration below.)

*Do you buy out time each day
from other activities to draw
close to Jehovah?*



Jehovah in Bible reading, meditation, and prayer nourish our hearts and nurture our love for our heavenly Father. However, we need to buy out time to draw close to God.

⁸ To illustrate: Imagine that it was possible to read God's Word, meditate on it, and pray to Jehovah only during a certain hour each day. Would you not jealously guard that time slot so that nothing interfered with your personal time with Jehovah? Of course, no one can restrict our access to God in prayer, and most of us can read the Bible whenever we want to. Yet, we may need to take measures to prevent the whirlwind of daily activities from infringing on our personal time with God. Do you buy out as much time as possible each day to draw close to Jehovah?

"Joy of Holy Spirit"

⁹ A notable characteristic of the fruitage of the spirit is its stability. Joy, the second aspect we will consider, exemplifies this resilience. Joy is like a hardy plant that can thrive even in a hostile environment. Throughout the earth, many of God's servants have "accepted the word under much tribulation with joy of holy spirit." (1 Thess. 1:6) Others face hardships and deprivations. Yet, Jehovah empowers them by means of his spirit "to endure fully and be long-suffering with joy." (Col. 1:11) What is the source of this joy?

¹⁰ Unlike the "uncertain riches" of Satan's world, the spiritual treasures we have received from Jehovah have lasting value. (1 Tim. 6:17; Matt. 6:19, 20) He holds before us the joyful prospect of an unending future. We have the joy of being part of a worldwide Christian brotherhood. Above

9. What is a characteristic of the joy produced by holy spirit?

10. What is the source of our joy?

all, our joy is founded on our relationship with God. We share the feelings expressed by David, who although forced to live as a fugitive, praised Jehovah in song, saying: "Because your loving-kindness is better than life, my own lips will commend you. Thus I shall bless you during my lifetime." (Ps. 63:3, 4) Even when we experience hardships, joyful praise to God wells up in our hearts.

¹¹ The apostle Paul urged Christians: "Always rejoice in the Lord. Once more I will say, Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4) Why is it important for Christians to carry out their service to Jehovah with joy? Because of the issue Satan raised in connection with Jehovah's sovereignty. Satan claims that no one serves God out of a willing heart. (Job 1:9-11) If we were to serve Jehovah dutifully but joylessly, our sacrifice of praise would be incomplete. We therefore endeavor to heed the psalmist's exhortation: "Serve Jehovah with rejoicing. Come in before him with a joyful cry." (Ps. 100:2) Service rendered from a joyful, willing heart glorifies God.

¹² Realistically, though, even devoted servants of Jehovah will have times when they become downhearted and struggle to maintain a positive outlook. (Phil. 2:25-30) What can help us during such times? Ephesians 5: 18, 19 says: "Keep getting filled with spirit, speaking to yourselves with psalms and praises to God and spiritual songs, singing and accompanying yourselves with music in your hearts to Jehovah." How can we apply that counsel?

¹³ When beset by negative feelings, we can beseech Jehovah in prayer and endeavor to meditate on praiseworthy things. (**Read**

11. Why is it important that we serve Jehovah with joy?

12, 13. What can we do to combat negative feelings?

Philippians 4:6-9.) Some find that softly humming along with recordings of our Kingdom songs lifts their spirits and helps to rechannel their thoughts. A brother who faced an ordeal that often left him feeling frustrated and discouraged recalls: “In addition to regular heartfelt prayer, I memorized a few Kingdom songs. It brought peace to my heart to sing these beautiful praises to Jehovah either out loud or silently to myself. Also, the book *Draw Close to Jehovah* was released about that time. I read it twice during the following year. It was like a soothing balm for my heart. I know Jehovah blessed my efforts.”

“The Uniting Bond of Peace”

¹⁴ At our international conventions, del-

14. What is a notable feature of the peace produced by holy spirit?

egates from diverse backgrounds bask in the warmth of Christian fellowship. Such scenes highlight a feature of the peace enjoyed by God’s people today—our global unity. Onlookers are often astonished when they see people whom they would expect to be at enmity with one another “earnestly endeavoring to observe the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:3) This unity is truly remarkable in view of what many have had to overcome.

¹⁵ Uniting people who are of different backgrounds is a challenge. To help us gain insight into what must be overcome to achieve such unity, let us consider a first-century example, the apostle Peter. His attitude toward uncircumcised Gentiles can be

15, 16. (a) What was Peter’s background, and how did that pose a challenge for him? (b) How did Jehovah help Peter to adjust his attitude?

“These Are the True Christians”

The book *Between Resistance and Martyrdom—Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Third Reich* relates the comments of a young Jewish prisoner, in which he describes his first encounter with Jehovah’s Witnesses after he arrived at the Neuengamme concentration camp:

“As soon as we Jews from Dachau came into the block, the other Jews began to hide everything they had so that they would not have to share with us. . . . Outside [of the concentration camp], we had been there for one another. But here, in a situation of life and death, everybody’s first concern is to save himself, forgetting about the others. But imagine what the Bible Students were doing. At that time, they had to work very hard,

repairing some water pipes. The weather was cold and they were standing all day long in ice-cold water. Nobody understood how they could endure this. They said Jehovah gives them the strength. They needed their bread desperately, just like we, because they were hungry. But what were they doing? They collected all the bread they had, took half of it for themselves, and the other half they gave to their fellow believers who had just arrived from Dachau. And they welcomed them and kissed them. Before they ate, they prayed. Afterwards, they all were satisfied and happy. They said that they were no longer hungry. You see, that is when I thought: These are the true Christians.”

detected in his words: “You well know how unlawful it is for a Jew to join himself to or approach a man of another race; and yet God has shown me I should call no man defiled or unclean.” (Acts 10:24-29; 11:1-3) In keeping with a viewpoint common at the time, Peter apparently grew up believing that the Law obligated him to love only fellow Jews. It may have seemed completely normal to him to view Gentiles as enemies to be hated.*

¹⁶ Just imagine the awkwardness Peter must have felt as he entered the home of Cornelius. Could a man who had previously held negative views of Gentiles ever become “harmoniously joined together” with them in “the uniting bond of peace”? (Eph. 4:3, 16) Yes, for just days earlier, God’s spirit had opened Peter’s heart, enabling him to begin to adjust his attitude and overcome his prejudice. Through a vision, Jehovah made it clear to him that God’s view of people is not determined by race or nationality. (Acts 10:10-15) Thus, Peter could tell Cornelius: “For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34, 35) Peter changed, and he became truly united with “the whole association of brothers.”—1 Pet. 2:17.

¹⁷ Peter’s experience helps us to appreciate the remarkable transformation that is taking place among God’s people today. (**Read Isaiah 2:3, 4.**) Millions of people

“out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues” have adjusted their thinking to conform to “the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rev. 7:9; Rom. 12:2) Many of these at one time were steeped in the hatreds, enmities, and divisiveness of Satan’s world. But through a study of God’s Word and with the help of holy spirit, they have learned to “pursue the things making for peace.” (Rom. 14:19) The resulting unity brings praise to God.

¹⁸ How can each of us contribute to the peace and unity found among God’s people? Many congregations include those who have moved from a foreign land. Some may have different customs or may not speak our language well. Do we reach out to them? This is the course God’s Word recommends. Writing to the congregation in Rome, which included both Jewish and Gentile believers, Paul stated: “Welcome one another, just as the Christ also welcomed us, with glory to God in view.” (Rom. 15:7) Is there someone in your congregation whom you could get to know better?

¹⁹ What else can we do to allow holy spirit to operate in our lives? The next article will consider this question as we discuss the remaining aspects of the fruitage of the spirit.

18, 19. (a) How can each of us contribute to the peace and unity of the congregation? (b) What will we consider in the next article?

* Leviticus 19:18 says: “You must not take vengeance nor have a grudge against the sons of your people; and you must love your fellow as yourself.” Jewish religious leaders held that “the sons of your people” and “your fellow” referred to Jews only. The Law required that the Israelites stay separate from other nations. However, it did not endorse the viewpoint promoted by the first-century religious leaders, namely, that all non-Jews were enemies and were to be hated as individuals.

17. How is the unity enjoyed by God’s people remarkable?

How Would You Answer?

- How can we show self-sacrificing love for our brothers?
- Why is it important that we carry out our service to God with joy?
- How can we contribute to the peace and unity of the congregation?

ARE YOU ALLOWING GOD'S SPIRIT TO LEAD YOU?

"Your spirit is good; may it lead me in the land of uprightness."—PS. 143:10.

WHAT comes to mind when you think of the operation of holy spirit? Do you picture the mighty acts of Gideon and Samson? (Judg. 6:33, 34; 15:14, 15) Perhaps you think of the boldness of the early Christians or the serenity of Stephen as he stood before the Sanhedrin. (Acts 4:31; 6:15) In modern times, what about the joy that abounds at our international conventions, the integrity of our brothers who are imprisoned for their neutrality, and the remarkable growth of the preaching work? These examples all give evidence of the operation of holy spirit.

² Does holy spirit operate only on special occasions or under extraordinary circumstances? No. God's Word speaks of Christians' "walking by spirit," "being led by spirit," and "living by spirit." (Gal. 5:16, 18, 25) These expressions indicate that holy spirit can continually exercise an influence in our lives. On a daily basis, we should entreat Jehovah to guide our thinking, speech, and actions by means of his spirit. (***Read Psalm 143:10.***) As we allow the spirit to operate freely in our lives, it will produce in us fruitage that is refreshing to others and that brings praise to God.

³ Why is it vital that we be led by holy spirit? Because another force seeks to dominate

us, a force that opposes the operation of holy spirit. That other force is what the Scriptures term "the flesh," which refers to the sinful inclinations of our fallen flesh, the legacy of imperfection we have received as descendants of Adam. (***Read Galatians 5:17.***) What, then, is involved in allowing ourselves to be led by God's spirit? Are there practical steps we can take to counteract the pull of our sinful flesh? Let us consider these questions as we discuss the remaining six aspects of "the fruitage of the spirit," namely, "long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control."—Gal. 5:22, 23.

Mildness and Long-Suffering Promote Peace in the Congregation

⁴ ***Read Colossians 3:12, 13.*** In the congregation, mildness and long-suffering work hand in hand to promote peace. Both of these aspects of the spirit's fruitage help us to deal graciously with others, to remain calm under provocation, and to avoid retaliating when others say or do unkind things. If we have a difference with a fellow Christian, long-suffering, or patience, will help us not to give up on our brother or sister but to do what we can to heal the breach. Are mildness and long-suffering really needed in the congregation? Yes, because all of us are imperfect.

⁵ Consider what took place between Paul

1, 2. (a) Name some occasions on which Jehovah used holy spirit in behalf of his servants. (b) Is the operation of holy spirit limited to special occasions? Explain.

3. (a) Why do we need to be led by holy spirit? (b) What questions will we consider?

4. How do mildness and long-suffering contribute to peace in the congregation?

5. What occurred between Paul and Barnabas, and what does this underscore?



How can you prevent a discussion from becoming heated?

about speaking, slow about wrath; for man's wrath does not work out God's righteousness." Depending on the circumstances, he might try to change the subject, defer the discussion, or excuse himself before the conversation becomes heated.—Prov. 12:16; 17:14; 29:11.

⁷ What are the benefits of following this counsel? By taking time to calm down,

and Barnabas. They had worked side by side for years in advancement of the good news. Each had commendable qualities. Yet, on one occasion, there occurred between them "a sharp burst of anger, so that they separated from each other." (Acts 15:36-39) This incident underscores that even among devoted servants of God, disagreements will at times arise. If a Christian has a misunderstanding with a fellow believer, what might he do to prevent the situation from escalating into a heated exchange that could result in a lasting rift?

⁶ As is indicated by the phrase "a sharp burst of anger," the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas was sudden and intense. If a Christian senses that he is becoming angry when discussing a matter with a fellow believer, he is wise to heed the counsel found at James 1:19, 20: "Every man must be swift about hearing, slow

pray about the matter, and consider how best to reply, a Christian allows himself to be led by God's spirit. (Prov. 15:1, 28) Under the influence of the spirit, he can manifest mildness and long-suffering. He is thereby equipped to heed the counsel found at Ephesians 4:26, 29: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin . . . Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers." Indeed, when we clothe ourselves with mildness and long-suffering, we contribute to the peace and unity of the congregation.

Refresh Your Family With Kindness and Goodness

⁸ *Read Ephesians 4:31, 32; 5:8, 9.* Like a gentle breeze and a cool drink on a hot day, kindness and goodness are refreshing. Within the family circle, they contribute to a pleasant atmosphere. Kindness is an endearing quality that stems from genuine in-

6, 7. (a) What Scriptural counsel can we follow before a discussion with a fellow believer becomes heated? (b) What are the benefits of being "swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath"?

8, 9. What are kindness and goodness, and what effect do they have on the atmosphere in the home?

terest in others, an interest that is manifested in helpful acts and considerate words. Goodness, like kindness, is a positive quality that is expressed in actions that benefit others. It is marked by a spirit of generosity. (Acts 9:36, 39; 16:14, 15) But goodness involves something more.

⁹ Goodness is moral excellence. It involves not just what we do but, more important, what we are. Picture a woman preparing fruit for her family, examining each piece as she slices it to make sure that it is sweet and ripe all the way through, without defect inside or out. Similarly, the goodness produced by holy spirit permeates a Christian's entire way of life.

¹⁰ In a Christian household, what can help family members to treat one another with kindness and goodness? Accurate knowledge of God's Word plays an important role. (Col. 3:9, 10) Some family heads include a study of the fruitage of the spirit as part of their weekly Family Worship evening. Such a consideration is not difficult to arrange. Using the research tools available in your language, select material on each aspect of the spirit's fruitage. You might consider just a few paragraphs per week, spending several weeks on each aspect. As you study the material, read and discuss the cited scriptures.

10. What can be done to help family members cultivate the fruitage of the spirit?

A study of the fruitage of the spirit can benefit your family

Look for ways to apply what you learn, and pray for Jehovah to bless your efforts. (1 Tim. 4:15; 1 John 5:14, 15) Can such a study really make a difference in the way family members treat one another?

¹¹ A young couple, desiring to make a success of their marriage, decided to make an in-depth study of the fruitage of the spirit. How have they benefited? The wife comments: "Learning that kindness includes both fidelity and loyalty has made a real difference in how we treat each other down to this day. It has taught us to be yielding as well as forgiving. And it has helped us learn to say 'thank you' and 'I'm sorry' when appropriate."

¹² Another Christian couple, who were experiencing marital problems, realized that kindness was missing in their relationship. They decided to study the subject of kindness together. With what result? The

11, 12. How did two Christian couples benefit from making a study of kindness?



*What dangers do we avoid
by exercising faith and
self-control?*

husband recalls: “Our study of kindness helped us to see the need to give each other the benefit of the doubt rather than impute wrong motives, to look for the good in each other. We began to take more of an interest in each other’s needs. Being kind included inviting my wife to express freely what was on her mind without my taking offense at what she said. It meant that I had to set aside my pride. As we began to put kindness into practice in our marriage, our defenses gradually melted away. It was quite liberating.” Would your family benefit from a study of the fruitage of the spirit?

Exercise Faith When in Private

¹³ Christians need to allow God’s spirit to lead them both in public and in private. Today in Satan’s world, sordid images and degraded entertainment have proliferated. This poses a danger to our spirituality. What is a Christian to do? God’s Word counsels us: “Put away all filthiness and that superfluous thing, badness, and accept with mildness the implanting of the word which is able to save your souls.” (Jas. 1:21) Let us consider how faith, another aspect of the spirit’s fruitage, can help us to remain clean before Jehovah.

¹⁴ Faith means, fundamentally, that Jehovah God is real to us. If God is not real to us, wrong conduct will be just a short step away. Consider what happened among God’s people in ancient times. Jehovah revealed to the prophet Ezekiel that detestable things were being done in private, saying:

13. What danger to our spirituality must we guard against?

14. How can lack of faith lead to wrong conduct?



“Have you seen, O son of man, what the elderly ones of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each one in the inner rooms of his showpiece? For they are saying, ‘Jehovah is not seeing us. Jehovah has left the land.’” (Ezek. 8:12) Did you notice what contributed to the problem? They did not believe that Jehovah was aware of what they were doing. Jehovah was not real to them.

¹⁵ In contrast, consider the example of Joseph. Although away from his family and his people, Joseph refused to commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife. Why? He said: “How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?” (Gen. 39:7-9) Yes, Jehovah was real to him. If God is real to us, we will not view unclean entertainment or do anything else in private that we know displeases God. Our resolve will be like that of the psalmist who sang: “I shall walk about in the integrity of my heart inside my

15. How does strong faith in Jehovah protect us?

house. I shall not set in front of my eyes any good-for-nothing thing.”—Ps. 101:2, 3.

Guard Your Heart by Exercising Self-Control

¹⁶ Self-control, the final aspect of the spirit’s fruitage, enables us to say no to things that God condemns. It can help us to guard our heart. (Prov. 4:23) Consider the scenario found at Proverbs 7:6-23, which describes how “a young man in want of heart” succumbs to the wiles of a prostitute. He becomes ensnared after “passing along on the street near her corner.” Perhaps he ventured into her neighborhood out of curiosity. All too quickly, he fails to discern that he is being led into a foolish course that “involves his very soul.”

¹⁷ How could the young man have avoided this disastrous mistake? By heeding the warning: “Do not wander into her roadways.” (Prov. 7:25) There is a lesson for us: If we want God’s spirit to lead us, we need to avoid placing ourselves in the path of temptation. One way a person could wander into the foolish course of the “young man in want of heart” is by aimlessly flipping through television channels or surfing the Internet. Whether intentionally or not, he might well chance upon sexually stimulating scenes. He could gradually develop the unclean habit of viewing pornography, with devastating consequences to his conscience and his relationship with God. It could involve his very life.—**Read Romans 8:5-8.**

¹⁸ Of course, we can and should exercise

16, 17. (a) As described in the book of Proverbs, how does “a young man in want of heart” become ensnared in sin? (b) As depicted on page 26, how could something similar happen today regardless of one’s age?

18. What measures might a Christian take to guard his heart, and how do these involve the exercise of self-control?

self-control by taking immediate action if we are confronted with a provocative image. But how much better if we avoid the situation in the first place! (Prov. 22:3) Setting appropriate safeguards and adhering to them involve the exercise of self-control. For example, keeping the computer in an open area can serve as a protection. Some find it best to use the computer or watch television only when others are present. Others have decided not to have access to the Internet. (**Read Matthew 5:27-30.**) May we take whatever measures are necessary to protect ourselves and our family so that we can worship Jehovah “out of a clean heart and out of a good conscience and out of faith without hypocrisy.”—1 Tim. 1:5.

¹⁹ The fruitage produced through the operation of holy spirit brings many benefits. Mildness and long-suffering contribute to peace in the congregation. Kindness and goodness promote family happiness. Faith and self-control help us to remain close to Jehovah and clean before him. Moreover, Galatians 6:8 assures us: “He who is sowing with a view to the spirit will reap everlasting life from the spirit.” Yes, based on Christ’s ransom, Jehovah will use holy spirit to impart endless life to those who allow themselves to be led by the spirit.

19. What are the benefits of allowing holy spirit to lead us?

How Would You Answer?

- How do mildness and long-suffering promote peace in the congregation?
- What can help Christians to manifest kindness and goodness at home?
- How do faith and self-control help a Christian to guard his heart?

Do You Remember?

Have you appreciated reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*? Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

- **Why can we believe that the garden of Eden was a real place?**

The Bible portrays it as real, giving specifics about its location. Two of the rivers mentioned in the account flow today. This is not how myths or fairy tales are presented. Jesus, the most reliable Witness, spoke of Adam and Eve as real.—1/1, pages 5-6, 9.

- **Did God know that Adam and Eve would sin?**

No. Jehovah endowed them with intelligence and free will, enabling them to choose to obey or not. Though having the capacity of foreknowledge, God exercises that ability selectively.—1/1, pages 13-15.

- **Do true Christians use God's name as a talisman?**

Some people view an object or a symbol as a talisman, a charm that protects them magically, but God's people do not consider his name to be such. They put faith in Jehovah and seek to do his will, thus taking refuge in his name. (Zeph. 3:12, 13)—1/15, pages 5-6.

- **Who in Israel benefited from the custom of gleaning?**

All did. It promoted industriousness in the poor, who had to glean. Others benefited by being encouraged to be generous and to rely on God's blessing.—2/1, page 15.

- **Why did Jehovah reject King Saul?**

Saul was supposed to wait on God's prophet to offer a sacrifice, but the king disobeyed, offering the sacrifice himself. Later, he did not obey the command to wipe out an enemy people.—2/15, pages 22-23.

- **How can we show that we hate lawlessness?**

We will keep alcohol in its place, avoid occult

practices, and heed Jesus' warning about immorality. For example, we will avoid pornography and the fantasies it might create. (Matt. 5:27, 28) Also, we will not associate with disfellowshipped ones.—2/15, pages 29-32.

- **What is noteworthy about archaeologists' finding an ancient beehive colony in modern-day Israel?**

Archaeologists found more than 30 beehives, which scholars estimate produced as much as half a ton of honey annually. This indicates that beekeeping was done in the land that God had said would 'flow with milk and honey.' (Ex. 3:8)—3/1, page 15.

- **How was Jeremiah like a tree "planted by the waters, that sends out its roots"? (Jer. 17:7, 8)**

He never left off producing fruit; nor did he let himself be influenced by ridiculers. Rather, he stuck to the Source of life-sustaining water, taking to heart what God told him.—3/15, page 14.

- **What was Jesus' point in telling Martha that just a few things were needed or just one? (Luke 10:41, 42)**

He was not calling her a materialist for preparing various dishes to eat; nor was he dismissing her hard work. Rather, he was highlighting priorities. Martha was not taking advantage of a unique opportunity to deepen her faith.—4/1, pages 12-13.

- **What were some illegalities in the trial of Jesus?**

The court heard no arguments for acquittal. False witnesses were sought. The case was heard at night. The trial began and concluded in one day.—4/1, page 20.

I HAVE FOUND MANY GOOD THINGS

AS TOLD BY
ARTHUR BONNO



IT WAS 1951. My wife, Edith, and I were at a district convention when we heard the announcement that a meeting would be held for those interested in missionary service.

"Let's go and listen!" I exclaimed.

"Art, that's not for us!" Edith responded.

"Come on, Edie, we will just listen."

After the meeting, application forms for Gilead School were offered.

"Let's fill them out," I urged.

"But Art, what about our families?"

About a year and a half after that convention, we attended Gilead School and were assigned to serve in Ecuador, South America.

In New York's Yankee Stadium with fellow missionaries from our Gilead class, 1958



As you might gather from the conversation that my wife and I had at that convention, I had a rather forceful personality and a can-do attitude. Edith, however, was mild and modest. While growing up in the small town of Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., she had never ventured very far from home or met a foreigner. It was hard for her to leave her family. Even so, she wholeheartedly accepted the assignment to serve abroad. In 1954 we arrived in Ecuador and have been serving as missionaries in this country ever since. During our years here, we have found many good things. Would you like to hear about some of them?

Bright Memories

Our first assignment was to the capital city, Quito, some 9,000 feet (2,850 m) high in the Andes Mountains. It took us two days by train and truck to travel there from the coastal city of Guayaquil—a trip now accomplished in 30 minutes by airplane! We served in Quito for four memorable years. Then, in 1958 another good thing occurred: We were invited to serve in the circuit work.

At that time, there were only two small circuits in the entire country. So in addition to visiting congregations, we spent many

weeks during the year preaching in small Indian towns where no Witnesses were living. Accommodations in those pueblos usually consisted of a tiny, windowless room with a bed and nothing else. We carried with us a wooden case that contained a kerosene burner, a pan, plates, a wash basin, sheets, a mosquito net, clothing, old newspapers, and some other items. We used the newspapers to plug the holes in the walls so that the rats would find it a bit harder to enter.

Although those rooms were dark and dingy, we have bright memories of the nightly conversations we had while sitting on the bed, eating a simple meal cooked on our kerosene burner. Since my impetuous nature often led me to speak before thinking, my wife at times would use those calm moments to mention tactful ways that I could better express myself to the brothers we visited. I listened to her, and my visits became more encouraging. Also, when I thoughtlessly spoke ill of another, she would refuse to participate in the conversation. I thus learned to maintain a positive view of my brothers. Mostly, though, our conversations at night revolved around points we learned from articles in *The Watchtower* and our field service experiences of that day. And what exciting experiences we had!

How We Found Carlos

In the town of Jipijapa, in western Ecuador, we were given the name of an interested person—just the name, Carlos Mejía, but no address. Leaving our rented room that morning, we did not know where to begin looking for him, so we simply struck out in a random direction. We had to dodge many a mud hole on the dirt streets because of the heavy rains the night before. I was walk-

ing ahead of my wife when, suddenly, I heard a cry of distress from behind, “Art!” I turned and saw that Edie was standing in black mud up to her knees. The scene was so humorous that I would have laughed had it not been for her tearful face.

I was able to pull her out of that mess, but her shoes remained stuck in the mud. A boy and a girl were watching, so I told them, “I will give you some money if you get those shoes out of the mud.” In a flash, the shoes were retrieved, but Edie needed a place to clean up. The children’s mother was observing the scene and invited us into her house, where she helped my wife wash her legs while the children cleaned the dirty shoes. Before we left, a good thing happened. I asked the woman if she knew where we could find a man named Carlos Mejía. With a surprised look on her face, she said, “He is my husband.” In time a Bible study was started, and all the members of that family were eventually baptized. Years later, Carlos, his wife, and two of their children became special pioneers.

Challenging Travels —Heartwarming Hospitality

Traveling in the circuit work posed challenges. We used buses, trains, trucks, dugout canoes, and small airplanes. One time John McLenachan, who served as the district overseer, and his wife, Dorothy, accompanied us on a preaching trip to fishing villages near the Colombian border. We traveled in a dugout canoe equipped with an outboard motor. Sharks as large as the canoe were swimming right alongside us! Even the experienced navigator with us became alarmed at the size of the sharks and quickly steered the canoe closer to shore.

The challenges that we encountered in the circuit work, though, were more than



*Visiting a Witness family while
in the circuit work, 1959*

worthwhile. We got to know wonderful, hospitable brothers. Many times the families with whom we stayed insisted that we eat three meals a day, while they ate only one. Or they made us sleep in the only bed in the house, while they slept on the floor. My wife often said, “These dear brothers and sisters help me to see how few things we really need to get by.”

“We Do Not Want to Hold Back”

In 1960 another good thing happened to us—we were invited to serve at the branch office in Guayaquil. While I did administrative work, Edith served in the ministry in a congregation near the branch. I never considered myself an office man and felt somewhat inept, but as Hebrews 13:21 indicates, God equips us “with every good thing to do his will.” Two years later, I was invited to attend a ten-month Gilead course to be held at Bethel in Brooklyn, New York. At that time, wives were expected to remain in their assignment. A letter

came from Brooklyn, addressed to my wife. She was asked to consider carefully whether she would be willing to accept the ten-month absence of her husband.

In response, Edith wrote: “I am sure that this will not be the easiest thing in the world to do, but we know that Jehovah will certainly help us through whatever difficulties may arise. . . . We do not want to hold back from any privileges that may be set before us or from any opportunity to be better qualified to carry out our responsibilities.” During the time that I was in Brooklyn, I received a letter from my wife every week.

Serving Alongside Faithful Fellow Believers

In 1966, because of health problems, Edith and I returned to Quito, where we resumed our missionary service alongside the local brothers and sisters. What fine integrity keepers they were!

A faithful sister had an unbelieving husband, who often beat her. One day, at six o’clock in the morning, someone called us to say that she had been beaten again. I dashed to the sister’s house. When I saw her, I could hardly believe my eyes. She was lying in bed, swollen and covered with bruises. Her husband had beaten her with a broom handle until it broke in two. Later that day, I found him at home and told him that he had done a cowardly thing. He apologized profusely.

In the early 1970’s, my health had improved and we resumed the circuit work. The city of Ibarra was part of our circuit. When we visited that city in the late 1950’s, only two Witnesses were there, a missionary and a local brother. So we were eager to meet the many new ones who had been added to the congregation.

At our first meeting there, Brother Rodrigo Vaca stood on the platform and conducted a part that included audience participation. Whenever he asked a question, those in attendance called out “Yo, yo!” (“Me, me!”) instead of raising their hands. Edith and I looked at each other in amazement. ‘What is going on here?’ I thought. Later we learned that Brother Vaca is blind but he recognizes the voices of the members of the congregation as they call out. He is a shepherd who really knows his sheep! This called to mind Jesus’ comments at John 10:3, 4, 14 about the Fine Shepherd and the sheep knowing one another very well. Today, Ibarra has six Spanish-speaking congregations, one Quichua-speaking congregation, and one sign-language congregation. Brother Vaca continues to serve faithfully as an elder and a special pioneer.*

Grateful for Jehovah’s Goodness

In 1974 we received another expression of Jehovah’s goodness when we were invited to return to Bethel, where I was again assigned to do administrative work and later was appointed to the Branch Committee. Edith at first worked in the kitchen, and later she began working in the office, where she serves to this day as a mail clerk.

Through the years, we have had the joy of welcoming hundreds of Gilead-trained missionaries, who bring maturity and zeal to the congregations they serve. We are also encouraged by the thousands of brothers and sisters who have come from over 30 countries to serve in this land. How their self-sacrificing spirit impresses us! Some sold homes and businesses in order to come here to serve in areas where there is a

* The life story of Brother Vaca appeared in the September 8, 1985, issue of *Awake!*

great need for Kingdom preachers. They bought vehicles to preach in outlying regions, established new congregations, and helped build Kingdom Halls. Numerous single sisters have come from abroad to pioneer here—and what zealous and capable workers they are!

Indeed, I have found many good things in my years of serving God. Foremost among these is my relationship with Jehovah. Also, I am grateful that Jehovah provided “a helper” for me. (Gen. 2:18) When I look back over our 69 years together as husband and wife, I think of Proverbs 18:22, which states: “Has one found a good wife? One has found a good thing.” It has been a pleasure to be in Edith’s company. She has helped me in so many ways. She also proved to be a loving daughter to her mother. From the time we arrived in Ecuador, my wife sent her mother a letter every week until 1990, when her mom passed away at age 97.

I am now 90 years of age and Edith is 89. We treasure the joy we have had in helping some 70 people come to know Jehovah. We surely are glad that we filled out those applications for Gilead School 60 years ago. That decision led to a life filled with many good things.

At the branch in Ecuador, 2002

