

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

MAY 5-11

How to Maintain the Spirit of Self-Sacrifice

PAGE 7 • SONGS: 61, 25

MAY 12-18

How to Maintain a Positive Viewpoint

PAGE 12 • SONGS: 74, 119

MAY 19-25

Honor the Aged Among You

PAGE 20 • SONGS: 90, 135

MAY 26-JUNE 1

Providing Care for the Elderly

PAGE 25 • SONGS: 134, 29





AUSTRALIA

COVER: Some Witnesses in Australia travel long distances to bring the good news to people who live and work on cattle stations in the outback

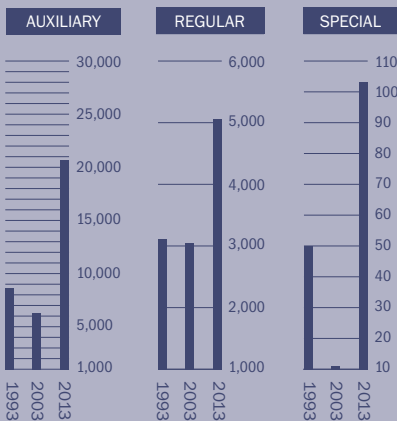
POPULATION

23,192,500

PUBLISHERS

66,967

GROWTH OF PIONEERS



STUDY ARTICLES

■ How to Maintain the Spirit of Self-Sacrifice

We face a subtle enemy that can undermine our self-sacrificing spirit. This article will identify that enemy and show how we can use the Bible to help fight it.

■ How to Maintain a Positive Viewpoint

A positive viewpoint can help us to endure in our worship of Jehovah. Why do some struggle with a negative viewpoint? This study will show us how we can use the Bible to help us maintain a positive view of ourselves.

■ Honor the Aged Among You

■ Providing Care for the Elderly

These articles review the responsibilities of individual Christians and congregations toward elderly fellow believers and relatives. We will also consider some practical suggestions to help you meet such responsibilities.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

3 Reaching the Heart of Unbelieving Relatives

17 Family Worship—Can You Make It More Enjoyable?

30 Your Speech—“‘Yes’ and yet ‘No’ ”?

**THE WATCHTOWER®**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown,

ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2014 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

March 15, 2014

Vol. 135, No. 6 Semimonthly ENGLISH



“We should not try to force the issue and overwhelm our relatives.”—Jürgen

Reaching the Heart of Unbelieving Relatives

“GO HOME to your relatives, and report to them all the things Jehovah has done for you and the mercy he has shown you,” said Jesus Christ. At the time he was likely in Gadara, southeast of the Sea of Galilee, speaking to a man who wanted to become his follower. Jesus’ words show that he understood a basic human trait—the desire to share matters of interest and importance with relatives.—Mark 5:19.

We often see that trait today too, though in some cultures it is more evident than in others. Hence, when an individual becomes a worshipper of the true God, Jehovah, he usually wants to share his new faith with his relatives. But how should he go about it? How can he reach the heart of relatives who have a different religion—or no faith at all? The Bible offers positive, realistic counsel.

“WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH”

In the first century, Andrew was one of the first ones to identify Jesus as the Messiah. And whom did he immediately tell of his discovery? “He [Andrew] first found his own brother Simon and said to him: ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means, when translated, ‘Christ’).” Andrew led Peter to Jesus, thereby giving Peter the chance to become one of Jesus’ disciples.—John 1:35-42.

About six years later when Peter was staying in Joppa, he was invited to travel northward to Caesarea to visit the house of Cornelius, an army officer. Whom did Peter find gathered in the house? “Cornelius, of course, was expecting [Peter and those traveling with him] and had called together his relatives and close friends.” Cornelius thus gave his relatives the chance to hear Peter speak

and to make a decision based on what they heard. —Acts 10:22-33.

What can we learn from the way Andrew and Cornelius treated their relatives?

Neither Andrew nor Cornelius left matters to chance. Andrew personally introduced Peter to Jesus, and Cornelius made arrangements for his relatives to hear what Peter had to say. But Andrew and Cornelius did not put their relatives under pressure or slyly try to maneuver them into becoming Christ's followers. Do you see a lesson in that? We do well to act similarly. We may be able to share some thoughts with our relatives and create opportunities for them to come in contact with Bible truths and with fellow believers. Still, we respect their freedom of choice and avoid exerting unpleasant pressure on them. To illustrate how we can help our relatives, consider the example of Jürgen and Petra, a married couple in Germany.

Petra studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and in time got baptized. Her husband, Jürgen, was an officer in the army. At first, Jürgen was not happy with his wife's decision. But in time, he realized that the Witnesses preach the truth from the Bible. He too dedicated his life to Jehovah, and today he is an elder in the local congregation. What advice does he now give about reaching the heart of a relative who has a different faith?

Jürgen observes: "We should not try to force the issue and overwhelm our relatives with spiritual matters. That may simply reinforce their reluctance. In the long run, it may be better if we tactfully offer tidbits now and again. It is also useful to put our relatives in contact with brothers who are of the same age group and who have similar interests. Doing this can bridge the gap."

The apostle Peter and the relatives of Cornelius reacted quickly to the Bible's message. Others in

the first century who came in contact with the truth needed more time to make a decision.

WHAT OF JESUS' BROTHERS?

Several of Jesus' relatives expressed faith in him during his public ministry. For example, it seems possible that the apostles James and John were cousins of Jesus and that their mother, Salome, was his aunt. She may have been one of the "many other women, who were ministering to them [Jesus and the apostles] from their belongings." —Luke 8:1-3.

Other members of Jesus' family, however, did not exercise faith immediately. For instance, on one occasion over a year after Jesus' baptism, crowds gathered in a house to hear him. "But when his relatives heard about it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying: 'He has gone out of his mind.'" Some time later, when Jesus' half brothers inquired about his travel plans, he did not answer them directly. Why? Because "his brothers were, in fact, not exercising faith in him." —Mark 3:21; John 7:5.

What can we learn from the way Jesus treated his relatives? He did not take offense when some claimed that he had lost his mind. Even after his execution and resurrection, Jesus gave additional encouragement to his relatives by appearing

"Much good can be achieved with patience, patience, and still more patience." —Roswitha



to his half brother James. This appearance seems to have helped convince not only James but also Jesus' other half brothers that He truly was the Messiah. Thus, they were with the apostles and others in an upper room in Jerusalem and evidently received the holy spirit. In time, James and Jude, another of Jesus' half brothers, went on to enjoy wonderful privileges.—Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:7.

SOME NEED MUCH TIME

As in the first century, some relatives today need considerable time before they get onto the way to life. Take, for example, Roswitha, who was an active Roman Catholic when her husband got baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1978. Sincere in her beliefs, Roswitha at first opposed her husband. But over the years, her opposition eased and she came to see that the Witnesses are teaching the truth. In 2003 she herself got baptized. What contributed to the change? Rather than being offended at her initial opposition, her husband gave Roswitha opportunities to change her opinion. What advice does she give? "Much good can be achieved with patience, patience, and still more patience."

Monika got baptized in 1974, and her two sons became Witnesses about ten years later. Although Hans, her husband, never opposed their faith, it was not until 2006 that he was baptized. With the benefit of hindsight, what advice does the family have? "Stick loyally to Jehovah, and do not compromise on questions of faith." Of course, it was important to assure Hans constantly of their continued love for him. And they never gave up hope that he would eventually accept their faith.

REFRESHED BY THE WATER OF TRUTH

Jesus once described the message of truth as being like water that imparts everlasting life. (John 4:13, 14) We want our relatives to be refreshed by drinking the cool, clear water of truth. Surely, we would not want them to choke because too much water was being forced on them too quickly. Whether they feel refreshed or choked

may depend on how we explain our faith to them. The Bible says that "the heart of the righteous one meditates before answering" and that "the heart of the wise one gives his mouth insight and adds persuasiveness to his speech." How can we apply this counsel?—Prov. 15:28; 16:23.

A wife may wish to explain her faith to her husband. If she "meditates before answering," she will carefully choose her words and not speak hastily. She should not give the impression of feeling self-righteous or superior. Her well-thought-out speech can be refreshing and promote peace. When is her husband relaxed and easily approachable? What sort of topics does he enjoy talking or reading about? Is he interested in science, politics, or sports? How can she arouse his curiosity about the Bible while at the same time respect his feelings and opinions? Thinking along those lines will help her to speak and act with insight.

Reaching the heart of family members who are not yet Witnesses is not simply a matter of explaining our faith in measured doses. What we say ought to be supported by a record of fine conduct.

EXEMPLARY CONDUCT

"Be consistent in applying Bible principles in everyday life. That is a very effective way of making the relative sit up and take notice, even though he may not admit as much," explains Jürgen, mentioned above. Hans, who got baptized almost 30 years after his wife, agrees. "Exemplary Christian conduct is important, so that the relative sees the positive effect of the truth in our life." Our relatives ought to be able to see that our faith makes us different from others in a positive way, not in a negative or distasteful way.

The apostle Peter gave valuable counsel to wives whose husbands do not share their beliefs: "Be in subjection to your husbands, so that if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect.

Do not let your adornment be external—the braiding of hair and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothing—but let it be the secret person of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of the quiet and mild spirit, which is of great value in the eyes of God.”—1 Pet. 3:1-4.

Peter wrote that a husband could be persuaded by the exemplary behavior of his wife. With that Scriptural guideline in mind, a sister named Christa has been trying to touch her husband’s heart by her conduct ever since her baptism in 1972. Although her husband at one time studied with the Witnesses, he has not yet made the truth his own. He has attended some Christian meetings and gets on well with those in the congregation. They, in turn, respect his right to choose. How does Christa try to reach his heart?

“I am determined to stick to the way Jehovah wants me to go. At the same time, I try to win my husband ‘without a word’ through my good behavior. When Bible principles are not at stake, I do all I can to comply with his wishes. And, of course, I respect his free will and leave the matter in Jehovah’s hands.”

“Exemplary Christian conduct is important, so that the relative sees the positive effect of the truth in our life.”—Hans

Christa’s course illustrates the value of being flexible. She keeps an upbuilding routine in spiritual matters, including regular meeting attendance and a meaningful share in the Christian ministry. Yet, she shows understanding, realizing that her mate has a rightful claim to her love, time, and attention. Being flexible and understanding is wise for any of us who are dealing with unbelieving relatives. “There is an appointed time for everything,” explains the Bible. This includes time spent with family members, especially mates, who do not share our faith. Time spent together promotes communication. Experience shows that good communication decreases the risk of their feeling lonely, left out, or jealous. —Eccl. 3:1.

NEVER GIVE UP HOPE

“It is important to show that we love the family member and that we pray for him,” observes Holger, whose father got baptized 20 years after other members of the family. Christa adds that she ‘will never give up hope that her husband will take a stand for Jehovah after all and accept the truth.’ Our attitude toward our relatives who do not share our faith should always be positive, marked by hope.

Our goal is to keep relationships intact, to offer our relatives a chance to recognize the truth, and to touch their heart with the Bible’s message. And in all things we should behave “with a mild temper and deep respect.”—1 Pet. 3:15.





How to Maintain the Spirit of Self-Sacrifice

"If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself."—MATT. 16:24.

WHEN Jesus was on earth, he set a perfect example of self-sacrifice. He put aside his own desires and comforts in order to do God's will. (John 5:30) By remaining faithful to death on the torture stake, he proved that his spirit of self-sacrifice had no limit.—Phil. 2:8.

² As followers of Jesus, we too need to display the spirit of self-sacrifice. What does it mean to have a self-sacrificing spirit? Simply put, it means that a person is willing to give up his own interests in order to help others. In a sense, it is the opposite of selfishness. **(Read Matthew 16:24.)** An unselfish spirit can help us to place our feelings and personal preferences after those of others. (Phil. 2:3, 4) In fact, Jesus taught that an unselfish spirit is at the heart of our worship. How so? Christian love, which is part of the motivation behind self-sacrifice, is the hallmark of true disciples of Jesus. (John 13:34, 35) And think of the blessings we enjoy because we are part of a worldwide brotherhood that displays the spirit of self-sacrifice!

1. How did Jesus set a perfect example of self-sacrifice?
2. How can we display the spirit of self-sacrifice, and why should we do so?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How can we use the Bible to check ourselves for traces of selfishness?

King Saul's example provides us with what warnings?

How did Peter show that selfish tendencies can be overcome?

³ Still, we face an enemy that can subtly undermine our self-sacrificing spirit. That enemy is our tendency to be selfish. Recall how Adam and Eve manifested selfishness. Eve acted out of a selfish desire to be like God. Her husband manifested a selfish desire to please her. (Gen. 3:5, 6) After turning Adam and Eve away from true worship, the Devil continued to tempt people to be selfish. He even tried that approach when tempting Jesus. (Matt. 4:1-9) In our day, Satan has successfully misled most people, moving them to manifest selfishness in many ways. This merits our attention because the prevailing selfish spirit could rub off on us.—Eph. 2:2.

⁴ Selfishness may be compared to rust that develops on iron. If an iron object is exposed to the elements, it might begin to rust. The real danger lies in ignoring the rust, allowing it to develop to the point of causing structural damage or failure. Similarly, though we cannot presently eliminate our imperfection and selfish tendencies, we must be alert to the dangers involved and continue to fight such tendencies. (1 Cor. 9:26, 27) How can we recognize signs of selfishness in ourselves? And how can we to a greater degree cultivate our spirit of self-sacrifice?

USE THE BIBLE TO CHECK FOR SELFISHNESS

⁵ Just as we can use a mirror to check our physical appearance, so we can use

3. What might undermine our self-sacrificing spirit?

4. (a) Can we presently eliminate selfish tendencies? Explain. (b) What questions will we consider?

5. (a) How is the Bible like a mirror? (See opening image.) (b) When checking ourselves for selfishness, what must we avoid?

the Bible to check our inner person and correct any defects we might find. (**Read James 1:22-25.**) However, only if we use it properly will a mirror help us with our appearance. For example, if we just glance at a mirror, we might fail to notice a small but significant blemish. Or if we look into a mirror from an angle, we might see the image of someone else. Similarly, to use the Bible to see a defect, such as selfishness, we should do more than read it casually or use it to see someone else's faults.

⁶ To illustrate, we could read God's Word regularly, even daily, and still not see traces of selfishness that actually are developing in us. How is that possible? Consider this: In James' example of the mirror, the problem was not that the man failed to look carefully. James wrote that the man "*looks at himself.*" Here, James used a Greek word that denotes scrutiny or careful consideration. So in this case, what was the man's problem? James continued: "He goes away and immediately forgets what sort of person he is." Yes, he turned away from the mirror without acting on what he saw. In contrast, the successful man not only "peers into the perfect law" but also "continues in it." Instead of leaving the perfect law of God's Word behind, he persists in following its teachings. Jesus made a similar point when he said: "If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples." —John 8:31.

⁷ Therefore, to be successful in fighting traces of selfishness, you must first read God's Word carefully. That may help you to identify areas needing attention. But you need to go further. Dig

6. How do we 'continue' in the perfect law?

7. How can we use the Bible to check for traces of selfishness?

deeper by doing research. Once you have a Bible account clearly in mind, put yourself into it by asking such questions as: 'How would I have acted in this situation? Would I really have acted in a right way?' Most important, after you meditate on what you have read, strive to apply it. (Matt. 7:24, 25) Let us consider how we can use the accounts of King Saul and the apostle Peter to help us maintain a spirit of self-sacrifice.

LEARN FROM KING SAUL'S WARNING EXAMPLE

⁸ King Saul of Israel serves as a warning for us about how selfishness can eat away at our spirit of self-sacrifice. Saul began his kingship with a modest and humble view of himself. (1 Sam. 9: 21) He refused to punish Israelites who spoke out against his kingship, even though he could have felt justified in defending his God-given position. (1 Sam. 10:27) King Saul accepted the guidance of God's spirit by leading Israel in a successful battle against the Ammonites. Afterward, he humbly gave Jehovah the credit for the victory.—1 Sam. 11:6, 11-13.

⁹ Later, Saul allowed selfish thinking and pride to develop, like corrosive rust. When he defeated the Amalekites in battle, he put his own desires ahead of obedience to Jehovah. Saul greedily took the spoil instead of destroying it as God had commanded. And Saul arrogantly built a monument to himself. (1 Sam. 15:3, 9, 12) When the prophet Samuel told him that Jehovah was displeased, Saul tried to justify himself by focusing

on the part of God's command that he had obeyed and by blaming others for his error. (1 Sam. 15:16-21) Additionally, pride made Saul more concerned with saving face before the people than with pleasing God. (1 Sam. 15:30) How can we use the account about Saul as a mirror to help us maintain the spirit of self-sacrifice?

¹⁰ First, Saul's experience shows that we cannot be complacent, assuming that if we previously showed a self-sacrificing spirit, we will automatically continue to manifest it. (1 Tim. 4:10) Bear in mind that Saul did well and enjoyed God's favor for a while, but he failed to root out selfish tendencies that began to take hold. Jehovah ultimately rejected Saul for his disobedience.

¹¹ Second, we should beware of focusing only on areas in our life in which we are doing well, ignoring aspects that we need to work on. This would be like using a mirror to admire our new clothes while not noticing some dirt on our face. Even if we might not be as self-satisfied as Saul became, we should definitely work to avoid any tendency that may lead to the same bad course. If we receive counsel, let us take care not to justify our actions, minimize the problem, or shift the blame. Rather than be like Saul, it is much better to be open to counsel.—**Read Psalm 141:5.**

¹² However, what if we were to commit a serious sin? Saul wanted to preserve his reputation, and this kept him from making a spiritual recovery. In contrast, a spirit of self-sacrifice could

8. With what attitude did Saul begin his kingship, and how did he demonstrate this?

9. How did Saul come to develop selfish thinking?

10, 11. (a) What does Saul's experience teach us about maintaining a self-sacrificing spirit? (b) How can we avoid following Saul's bad course?

12. How could the spirit of self-sacrifice help us if we were to commit a serious sin?



After being corrected, how did Peter react? Would we react similarly?
(See paragraph 15)

help us to overcome embarrassment and get needed help. (Prov. 28:13; Jas. 5: 14-16) For example, one brother began viewing pornography at the age of 12, and he continued to do so in secret for over a decade. He relates: “It was very hard to admit to my wife and to the elders what I’d been doing. But now that I have admitted it, I feel that a huge weight has been taken off my shoulders. Some of my friends were disappointed when I was removed as a ministerial servant, as if I had let them down. Yet, I know that Jehovah is more pleased with my service now than when I was watching pornography, and his view is the one that really matters.”

PETER OVERCAME SELFISHNESS

¹³ The apostle Peter displayed the spirit of self-sacrifice while he was being trained by Jesus. (Luke 5:3-11) Yet, he had to fight selfish tendencies. For instance, he was indignant when the apos-

tles James and John schemed to gain prominent positions alongside Jesus in the Kingdom of God. Perhaps Peter thought that one of those seats should be for him because Jesus had already said that Peter would have a special role. (Matt. 16:18, 19) In any case, Jesus warned James and John, as well as Peter and the rest of the apostles, against selfishly trying to “lord it over” their brothers.—Mark 10:35-45.

¹⁴ Even after Jesus tried to correct Peter’s thinking, Peter continued his struggle with how he viewed himself. When Jesus told the apostles that they would temporarily abandon him, Peter put the others down and elevated himself by claiming that he alone would prove to be faithful. (Matt. 26:31-33) His self-assurance was unfounded, though, for that very night he failed to show a spirit of self-sacrifice. In what amounted to an effort to protect himself, Peter disowned Jesus three times.—Matt. 26:69-75.

¹⁵ Despite these struggles and fail-

13, 14. How did Peter manifest selfish tendencies?

15. Why is Peter’s overall example heartening?

ures, Peter's life is a heartening example. With personal effort and the help of God's holy spirit, Peter was able to overcome his misguided tendencies and display self-control and self-sacrificing love. (Gal. 5:22, 23) He endured trials that could be viewed as more severe than the ones he stumbled over earlier. He showed humility by how he reacted to a public rebuke from the apostle Paul. (Gal. 2:11-14) And after being rebuked, Peter did not hold a grudge, feeling that his status had been damaged by Paul's reprimand. Peter continued to express love for Paul. (2 Pet. 3:15) Peter's example can help us to cultivate a spirit of self-sacrifice.

¹⁶ Think about how you react in difficult circumstances. When Peter and the apostles were imprisoned and then flogged because of their preaching, they rejoiced "because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of [Jesus'] name." (Acts 5:41) You too can view persecution as an opportunity to imitate Peter and follow in Jesus' footsteps by displaying the spirit of self-sacrifice. **(Read 1 Peter 2:20, 21.)** This outlook could even help if you received needed discipline from the elders. Follow Peter's example rather than take personal offense.—Eccl. 7:9.

¹⁷ You can also benefit from Peter's example when it comes to spiritual goals. You can pursue such in a way that reflects a spirit of self-sacrifice. Yet, be careful that this pursuit does not become a quest for prominence. So ask yourself, 'Could my desire to improve or in-

crease my service to Jehovah be tainted by a wish for more personal recognition or authority, as seemed to have been the case when James and John made their request to Jesus?'

¹⁸ If you detect a measure of selfishness in your heart, ask Jehovah to help you to correct your thinking and feelings; then work harder to concentrate on his glory instead of your own. (Ps. 86:11) You might also pursue goals that would not put you in the limelight. For instance, you might cultivate more fully some aspect of the fruitage of the spirit that you find especially challenging. Or if you prepare diligently for your meeting parts but have little interest in sharing in cleaning the Kingdom Hall, you could set a goal to apply the advice found at **Romans 12:16.—Read.**

¹⁹ When we look carefully at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word and see flaws, even evidences of selfishness, we might become discouraged. If that ever happens to you, reflect on the successful man in James' illustration. James did not stress how quickly the man fixed the problems he detected or even that he was able to correct every blemish; rather, James says that the man 'continued in the perfect law.' (Jas. 1:25) He remembered what he saw in the mirror and kept working to improve. Yes, keep a positive view of yourself and a balanced view of your imperfections. **(Read Ecclesiastes 7:20.)** Continue to peer into the perfect law, and work to maintain your spirit of self-sacrifice. Jehovah is willing to help you, as he has helped so many of your brothers who, although imperfect, can and do have God's favor and blessing.

16. How can we display the spirit of self-sacrifice in difficult circumstances?

17, 18. (a) What might we ask ourselves about our spiritual goals? (b) What can we do if we sense a measure of selfishness in our heart?

19. What can we do so as not to be discouraged by what we see in the mirror of God's Word?



How to Maintain a Positive Viewpoint

“If a man should live many years, let him enjoy them all.”—ECCL. 11:8.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What may make maintaining a positive viewpoint a challenge?

How can we use the Bible to maintain a positive viewpoint?

How can the experiences of the needy widow, Elijah, and the writer of Psalm 102 help us to cultivate a positive viewpoint?

JEHOVAH wants us to be happy, and he pours out on us many blessings that should lead to happiness. For one thing, we are alive. Hence, we can use our life to praise God, since he has drawn us to true worship. (Ps. 144:15; John 6:44) Jehovah assures us of his love and helps us to endure in our service to him. (Jer. 31:3; 2 Cor. 4:16) We enjoy the spiritual paradise, where we find both abundant spiritual food and a loving brotherhood. Beyond that, we have a precious hope for the future.

² Despite having these reasons for happiness, some faithful servants of God struggle with negative thoughts about themselves. They may feel that neither they nor their service to Jehovah has much value to him. For those with persistent negative feelings, the idea of enjoying “many years” could seem to be a fantasy. Life might appear to be a series of dark days. —Eccl. 11:8.

³ For such brothers or sisters, negative feelings may be triggered by disappointments, illness, or some indication of the

-
1. What blessings from Jehovah can help us to be happy?
 2. With what do some faithful servants of God struggle?
 3. What may trigger negative feelings?

limitations of old age. (Ps. 71:9; Prov. 13:12; Eccl. 7:7) Moreover, every Christian must face the reality that the heart is treacherous and may condemn us even though God may be pleased with us. (Jer. 17:9; 1 John 3:20) The Devil falsely accuses God's servants. And those who have Satan's thinking may try to infect us with the view that faithless Eliphaz expressed—we are worthless to God. That was a lie in Job's day as it is today.—Job 4:18, 19.

⁴ Jehovah makes it clear in the Scriptures that he will be with those who “walk in the valley of deep shadow.” (Ps. 23:4) One way he is with us is by means of his Word. The Bible is “powerful by God for overturning strongly entrenched things,” including misconceptions and negative ideas. (2 Cor. 10:4, 5) Let us, then, consider how we can use the Bible to help us cultivate and maintain a positive viewpoint. You may gain personal benefit from this, as well as find ways to encourage others.

USE THE BIBLE TO CULTIVATE A POSITIVE VIEWPOINT

⁵ The apostle Paul described some things that may help us to cultivate a positive viewpoint. He urged the congregation in Corinth: “Keep testing whether you are in the faith.” (2 Cor. 13:5) “The faith” is the body of Christian beliefs revealed in the Bible. If our words and actions match those beliefs, then we pass the test and show that we are “in the faith.” Of course, we must also compare our lives with the entire scope of Christian teaching. We cannot pick and choose which parts we will follow.—Jas. 2:10, 11.

4. What will we consider in this article?

5. What test can help us to have a positive viewpoint?

⁶ You might hesitate to take that test, especially if you feel that you might fail. Yet, Jehovah's view of us is more important than ours, and his thinking is much higher than ours. (Isa. 55:8, 9) He examines his worshippers, not to condemn them, but to find their good qualities and to help them. When you use God's Word to test yourself to see “whether you are in the faith,” you will be seeing yourself more as God sees you. This can help you to replace any idea that you are worthless to God with a Bible-based assurance: You are precious in Jehovah's eyes. The result can be like opening the curtains to let the sunshine into a dark room.

⁷ An effective way to conduct this self-examination is to meditate on the example of faithful people referred to in the Bible. Compare their circumstances or feelings with yours, and see how you might have acted in their situation. Let us look at three examples that illustrate how you can use the Bible to verify that you are “in the faith” and thus to cultivate a positive view of yourself.

THE NEEDY WIDOW

⁸ At the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus watched a needy widow. Her example can help us to maintain a positive viewpoint despite our limitations. **(Read Luke 21:1-4.)** Consider the widow's circumstances. She had to endure not only the grief of losing her husband but also a religious climate dominated by leaders who would rather “devour the houses of

6. Why should we test ourselves as to ‘whether we are in the faith’? (See opening image.)

7. How can we benefit from Biblical examples of faithfulness?

8, 9. (a) What were the circumstances of the needy widow? (b) What negative feelings might the widow have had?



What lesson do you draw from the example of the needy widow?
(See paragraphs 8-10)

the widows” than help such vulnerable ones. (Luke 20:47) She was so poor that she could contribute to the temple only what a laborer might earn in a few minutes.

⁹ Try to imagine how the widow felt as she entered the temple courtyard carrying her two small coins. Would she be thinking about how little she was going to contribute compared with what she may have been able to give when her husband was alive? Would she be embarrassed at seeing the large donations made by those ahead of her, perhaps wondering whether her offering was really worthwhile? Even if she had such feelings, she still did what she could in behalf of true worship.

¹⁰ Jesus showed that both the widow and her contribution were valuable to Jehovah. He said that she “put in more than [the rich] all did.” Her donation

would be mixed in with what others gave, yet Jesus singled her out for praise. The treasury workers who later came across those two small coins could hardly have known how precious the coins and their donor were to Jehovah. Still, God’s view was the one that really mattered, not what other people thought or even how the widow viewed herself. Can you use this account to test whether you are in the faith?

¹¹ Your circumstances may directly affect what you can offer to Jehovah. Because of age or infirmity, the amount of time that some are able to preach the good news is very limited. Would they be justified in questioning whether their activity is worth reporting? Even if you are not greatly restricted, you might feel that your efforts represent only a small part of all the hours that God’s people spend each year in worshipping him.

10. How did Jesus show that the widow was valuable to God?

11. What can you learn from the account of the widow?

Still, we learn from the account of the poor widow that Jehovah notices and treasures each act done for him, especially when done in the face of difficult circumstances. Think back on your worship of Jehovah during the past year. Did one of the hours you devoted to him require a special sacrifice on your part? If so, you can be sure that he values what you did for him during that hour. When, like the needy widow, you are doing all you can in Jehovah's service, you have solid reason for believing that you are "in the faith."

"TAKE MY LIFE AWAY"

¹² The prophet Elijah was loyal to Jehovah and had strong faith. Yet, at one point he felt so low that he asked Jehovah to put him to death, saying: "It is enough! Now, O Jehovah, take my life away." (1 Ki. 19:4) Those who have not experienced such despair might be tempted to dismiss Elijah's prayer as mere "wild talk." (Job 6:3) However, his feelings were real. Note, though, that rather than chastise Elijah for wanting to die, Jehovah helped him.

¹³ How had Elijah come to feel as he did? Shortly before this, he had presided over a decisive test in Israel that proved that Jehovah is the true God, and this led to the execution of 450 prophets of Baal. (1 Ki. 18:37-40) Elijah likely hoped that God's people would now return to pure worship, but that did not happen. Wicked Queen Jezebel sent a message to Elijah that she was arranging for him to be killed. Fearing for his life, Elijah fled south across neighboring Judah into the wilderness, a barren and wild place.—1 Ki. 19:2-4.

12-14. (a) How did negative feelings affect Elijah? (b) Why might Elijah have felt as he did?

¹⁴ Alone with his thoughts, Elijah reflected on the seeming futility of his work as a prophet. He told Jehovah: "I am no better than my forefathers." His point was that he felt as useless as the dust and bones of his dead ancestors. He had, in effect, tested himself by his own standards and had decided that he was a failure, of no value to Jehovah or anyone else.

¹⁵ But the Almighty saw Elijah differently. Elijah remained valuable in God's eyes, and Jehovah took steps to assure him of that reality. God sent an angel to strengthen Elijah. Jehovah also provided food and drink that would sustain Elijah during his 40-day trip south to Mount Horeb. Moreover, God kindly corrected Elijah's mistaken idea that no other Israelites had remained faithful to Jehovah. Significantly, God gave Elijah new assignments, which he accepted. Elijah benefited from Jehovah's help, and he returned to his work as a prophet with renewed energy.—1 Ki. 19:5-8, 15-19.

¹⁶ Elijah's experience can help you to verify that you are in the faith and can move you toward a positive viewpoint. First, think of the ways that Jehovah has sustained you. Might one of his servants, perhaps an elder or other mature Christian, have helped you at some point when you were in need? (Gal. 6:2) Have you been nourished spiritually by the Bible, our Christian publications, and the congregation meetings? The next time you benefit in one of these ways, consider the true Source of your help and offer a prayer of thanks to Him.—Ps. 121:1, 2.

15. How did God assure Elijah that He still valued him?

16. What are some ways that God has likely sustained you?

¹⁷ Second, recognize that a negative viewpoint can be deceptive. God's evaluation of us is what counts. (**Read Romans 14:4.**) Jehovah values our devotion and faithfulness to him; he does not measure us by our accomplishments. And it could well be that, just as was true of Elijah, you have accomplished more for Jehovah than you realize. There likely are ones in the congregation whom you have affected for good, as well as those in the territory who have been exposed to the truth through your efforts.

¹⁸ Finally, view each assignment from Jehovah as proof that he is with you. (Jer. 20:11) Like Elijah, you might be discouraged because your service seems fruitless or because some spiritual goal seems unattainable. Yet, you still share the greatest privilege that any of us can now have—that of preaching the good news and bearing God's name. Remain faithful. Then, in a sense, the words in one of Jesus' parables can be said to you: "Enter into the joy of your master."—Matt. 25:23.

THE "PRAYER OF THE OPPRESSED ONE"

¹⁹ The writer of Psalm 102 was desperate. He was "oppressed," suffering great physical or emotional distress, and he lacked the strength to deal with his problems. (Ps. 102, superscription) We find in his words an indication that he was absorbed in his pain, loneliness, and personal feelings. (Ps. 102:3, 4, 6, 11) He believed that Jehovah wanted to cast him aside.—Ps. 102:10.

17. What does Jehovah value in his servants?

18. What does your assignment from Jehovah prove?

19. What situation did the writer of Psalm 102 face?

²⁰ Yet, the psalmist could still use his life to praise Jehovah. (**Read Psalm 102:19-21.**) As we see from Psalm 102, even those who are in the faith can be in pain and be struggling to focus on anything else. The psalmist felt "like a solitary bird on a roof," as if he had only his troubles for company. (Ps. 102:7) If you ever feel that way, pour out your heart to Jehovah as the psalmist did. The prayers of the oppressed one—your prayers—can help you as you battle negative thoughts. Jehovah promises that "he will pay attention to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their prayer." (Ps. 102:17) Trust that promise.

²¹ Psalm 102 also shows how you might gain a more positive viewpoint. The psalmist did so by shifting attention to his relationship with Jehovah. (Ps. 102:12, 27) He found comfort in knowing that Jehovah would always be there to sustain His people through trials. So if negative feelings temporarily keep you from doing as much as you want to in God's service, pray about it. Ask God to hear your prayer not only so that you may experience some relief from your distress but also "so that the name of Jehovah will be declared."—Ps. 102:20, 21.

²² Yes, we can use the Bible to prove to ourselves that we are in the faith and are valuable to Jehovah. To be sure, in the present system of things, we may not be able to eliminate all negative feelings or discouragement. Still, each of us can please Jehovah and gain salvation by faithfully enduring in his service.—Matt. 24:13.

20. How can prayer help someone who battles negative thoughts?

21. How might one who is battling negative feelings gain a more positive viewpoint?

22. How can each of us please Jehovah?



Family Worship

Can You Make It More Enjoyable?

"We get so engrossed in discussions during the Family Worship evening that it often goes on till late at night if I don't stop my family," says a father in Brazil. A family head in Japan says that his ten-year-old son does not seem to notice the time and wants to continue. Why? "He is motivated, and that contributes to his joy," observes the father.

Of course, not all children are so motivated, and frankly, some may not enjoy family worship. But why not? A father in Togo shared this insight, "The worship of Jehovah should not be boring." If it is, could it be a reflection of how the family worship is being conducted? Many families have found that family worship can be, as Isaiah said of the Sabbath, "an exquisite delight."—Isa. 58: 13, 14.

Christian fathers realize that if their family is to find joy in family worship, a relaxed atmosphere should prevail. Ralf, who has three daughters and one son, says that their family worship is more like an informal conversation than a study; everyone is involved. Granted, keeping everyone interested and immersed in the material may at times be a challenge. One mother admits: "I do not always have the energy to make family worship as enjoyable as I would like it to be." Can you meet that challenge?

FLEXIBILITY AND VARIETY

"We have to be flexible," says a father of two in Germany. "The most important thing for our family," says Natalia, a mother of two "is variety, variety, variety." Many families divide their family worship into

several parts. "That makes the study more dynamic and gets all in the family involved," explains Cleiton, the father of two teenagers in Brazil. By dividing the study time, parents can give attention to the needs of each child if there is a considerable age difference. The parents can address the needs of each family member and can be flexible in choosing both the material and the format.

What are some families doing to enhance the variety? Some start their family worship by singing songs to Jehovah. "It creates a good atmosphere and mentally prepares us for the material at hand," says Juan in Mexico. His family picks songs that are related to some of the material selected for the evening.

A number of families read a section of the Bible together. For the sake of variety, different family members read the parts of various individuals mentioned in a Bible portion. A father in Japan admits that for him it was "a bit unusual to read that way at first." But his two boys were happy to see their parents enjoying something with them. Some families even act out Bible stories. Children "often see things in a Bible account that we as parents have missed," says Roger, a father of two sons in South Africa.

Another way to create variety is to work together on a project, such as building a model of Noah's ark or of Solomon's temple. Such projects call for research that can be exciting. For example, in the living room of a family in Asia was a five-year-old girl with her parents and grandmother. They were making a board game based on the apostle Paul's missionary tours. Other families have made board games based on accounts found in the book of Exodus. Variety "brought new life to our family worship and into our family itself," says 19-year-old Donald in Togo. Can you think of a project that will make your family worship even more enjoyable?

PREPARATION INDISPENSABLE

Although variety and flexibility make the family worship interesting, to make it really instruc-

tive, all need to prepare. Sometimes young ones get tired, so fathers need to put forethought into the material chosen and take time to prepare well. One father says, "When I am prepared, everyone has a more meaningful study session." A father in Germany informs his family in advance what they will consider in the weeks to come. When scheduling a Bible-based DVD as part of their family worship, a father of six pre-teen children in Benin provides questions ahead of time. Indeed, preparation does make a difference in the quality of our family worship.

When the family know ahead of time what will be considered, they can talk about it during the week, thus building their enthusiasm. And if each one has an assignment, each one will feel that it is *his* or *her* family worship.

STRIVE FOR REGULARITY

Not a few families face the challenge of having their family worship regularly.

Many fathers have to work long hours just to make ends meet. For instance, one father in Mexico leaves home at six o'clock in the morning and does not return until eight o'clock in the evening. Furthermore, there may on occasion be a need to adjust the Family Worship period because of another spiritual event.

Still, we need to be resolute about having family worship regularly. Eleven-year-old Loïs in Togo says this about her family's determination: "Even though we sometimes have to start our family worship late because of something that has come up during the day, we always have our family worship." You can understand why some families schedule their family worship earlier in the week. If something unexpected occurs, they can reschedule family worship for later that week.

As the very designation "family worship" indicates, it is part of your *worship* to Jehovah. Let all members of your family bring to Jehovah 'the young bulls of their lips' every week. (Hos. 14:2, ftn.) And may that be a joyful time for each one in the family, "for the joy of Jehovah is your stronghold."—Neh. 8:9, 10.



United States of America

YOUR FAMILY
WORSHIP SHOULD BE:

Relaxed
Flexible
Varied
Well-Prepared
Held Regularly



Sri Lanka

South Africa





Honor the Aged Among You

“You must show honor to an older man.”—LEV. 19:32.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How does Jehovah view
faithful older ones?

What responsibilities do
adult children have toward
their aging parents?

How can congregations
honor the aged among
them?

JEHOVAH never intended for humans to suffer the debilitating effects of aging. On the contrary, his purpose was that men and women enjoy perfect health in Paradise. But now “all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain.” (Rom. 8:22) How do you think God must feel when he observes the ravages of sin in humans? Moreover, many elderly ones experience neglect at a time in their lives when they need more assistance.—Ps. 39:5; 2 Tim. 3:3.

² Jehovah’s people are grateful that there are elderly ones in the congregations. We benefit from their wisdom and are inspired by their example of faith. Many of us are related to one or more of these dear older ones. Yet, whether we are related to elderly brothers and sisters or not, we take an interest in their welfare. (Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 1:22) It will benefit all of us to examine God’s view of the elderly. We will also consider the responsibilities of family members as well as the congregation with regard to our beloved older ones.

“DO NOT CAST ME OFF”

³ “Do not cast me off in my old age; do not abandon me when my strength fails,” the inspired writer of Psalm 71:9

-
1. In what sad state does humanity find itself?
 2. Why do Christians have particular regard for the elderly?
 - 3, 4. (a) What significant request did the writer of Psalm 71 make to Jehovah? (b) What can senior members of the congregation ask of God?

implored God. This psalm appears to be a continuation of Psalm 70, which bears the superscription “Of David.” So David likely made the request we read at Psalm 71:9. He served God from his youth to his advanced years, and Jehovah used him in mighty ways. (1 Sam. 17:33-37, 50; 1 Ki. 2:1-3, 10) Even so, David felt the need to ask Jehovah to continue to show him favor.—**Read Psalm 71:17, 18.**

⁴ Many today are like David. Despite advancing years and “days of distress,” they continue to praise God to the best of their ability. (Eccl. 12:1-7) Many of them may not be able to do all that they once did in various aspects of life, including the ministry. But they too can implore Jehovah to continue to smile on them and take care of them. Such faithful older ones can be sure that God will answer their prayers. After all, those prayers echo the same legitimate concerns that David expressed under divine inspiration.

⁵ The Scriptures make it plain that Jehovah highly values faithful older ones and that he expects his servants to honor such ones. (Ps. 22:24-26; Prov. 16:31; 20:29) “Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show honor to an older man, and you must be in fear of your God. I am Jehovah,” says Leviticus 19:32. Yes, honoring the older ones in the congregation was a serious responsibility when those words were written, and it is down to this day. What, though, about actually providing care for them? Whose responsibility is that?

THE FAMILY’S RESPONSIBILITY

⁶ God’s Word tells us: “Honor your

-
5. How does Jehovah view faithful older ones?
6. What example did Jesus set in caring for a parent?

father and your mother.” (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:2) Jesus underscored this commandment by condemning the Pharisees and scribes who refused to provide for their parents. (Mark 7:5, 10-13) Jesus himself set a good example. For instance, when he was at the point of death on the stake, Jesus entrusted the care of his mother, who was apparently then a widow, to his beloved disciple John.—John 19:26, 27.

⁷ The apostle Paul was inspired to write that believers should provide for their own households. (**Read 1 Timothy 5:4, 8, 16.**) Consider the context of what Paul wrote to Timothy. Paul discussed who might and who might not qualify to receive financial support from the congregation. He made it plain that believing children, grandchildren, and other relatives of elderly widows were to be the primary providers. Thus, no unnecessary financial burden would be on the congregation. Likewise today, one of the ways in which Christians practice “godly devotion” is by providing materially for relatives in need.

⁸ Simply put, adult Christian children have an obligation to make sure that their parents’ material needs are met. Paul was discussing believing relatives, but parents who are not members of the Christian congregation should not be neglected. Exactly how children provide care varies. No two situations are alike. The needs, temperament, and health of those involved differ. Some older ones have many children; others

7. (a) The apostle Paul set out what principle about providing for parents? (b) What is the context of Paul’s words?

8. What wisdom is evident in the Bible’s offering no specific solutions when it comes to caring for elderly parents?

just one child. Some can count on support from the State; others cannot. Personal preferences of those needing care also differ. Thus, it would not be wise or loving to criticize the way in which someone is trying to care for aged relatives. Jehovah, after all, can bless any Scriptural decision and make it work, which has been true since Moses' day. —Num. 11:23.

⁹ When parents and children live far apart, it can be challenging to provide elderly parents with necessary help. A sudden deterioration in a parent's health, perhaps as a result of a fall, a broken bone, or some other crisis, may precipitate a need to visit Mom and Dad. Thereafter, they may need assistance —perhaps temporarily or perhaps on a long-term basis.*

¹⁰ Full-time servants whose theocratic assignments have taken them far from home may face particularly difficult decisions. Those serving as Bethelites, missionaries, and traveling overseers all view their assignment as precious, as a blessing from Jehovah. Still, if their parents get sick, the first reaction might be, 'We need to leave our assignment and return home to look after our parents.' Yet, it would be wise to consider prayerfully whether that is what the parents really need or desire. No one should hastily give up service privileges, and it may not always be necessary. Could the health issue be temporary, one with which some in the par-

ents' congregation would be happy to help?—Prov. 21:5.

¹¹ Consider, for example, the case of two fleshly brothers who served far from home. One was a missionary in South America, the other worked at world headquarters, in Brooklyn, New York. The brothers' elderly parents needed help. The sons and their wives visited the parents in the Far East to see what help could best be provided and how. In time, the couple in South America were weighing leaving their assignment to return home. Then they received a telephone call from the coordinator of the body of elders in the parents' congregation. Those elders had discussed the situation and wanted the missionaries to continue in their assignment as long as possible. The elders appreciated this couple's service and were determined to do all they could to help them care for their parents. All in the family appreciated the loving concern.

¹² Whatever strategy a Christian family adopts to care for the needs of elderly parents, all concerned will certainly want to make sure that it reflects well on God's name. Never would we want to be like the religious leaders in Jesus' day. (Matt. 15:3-6) We want our decisions to honor God and the congregation.—2 Cor. 6:3.

THE CONGREGATION'S RESPONSIBILITY

¹³ Not all can assist full-time ministers in the above-mentioned way. However, it is clear from a situation that

* The following article will consider some of the care options that may be open to the elderly and their children.

9-11. (a) What difficult situations may some face? (See opening image.) (b) Why should adult children not be hasty about leaving the full-time service? Illustrate.

12. What should be the concern of a Christian family regarding any caregiving decision that they make?

13, 14. Why can we conclude from the Scriptures that congregations are interested in the care of elderly members?

arose in the first century that congregations are interested in caring for the needs of exemplary older brothers and sisters. The Bible says about the Jerusalem congregation that “no one was in need among them.” It was not that all were materially well-off. Evidently, some had little materially, but “distribution would be made to each one according to his need.” (Acts 4:34, 35) Later, a situation developed locally. It was reported that certain “widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution” of food. So the apostles directed the appointment of qualified men who, in turn, made arrangements to ensure that the widows’ needs were adequately and equitably met. (Acts 6:1-5) It is true that the daily distribution was a temporary arrangement designed to meet the needs of ones who became Christians at Pentecost 33 C.E. and who remained for a time in Jerusalem to be built up spiritually. Even so, the apostles’ response illustrates that the congregation can help to care for needy members.

¹⁴ As noted, Paul gave Timothy instructions outlining the circumstances under which Christian widows would qualify for material assistance from the congregation. (1 Tim. 5:3-16) The inspired Bible writer James likewise acknowledged the Christian obligation to look after orphans, widows, and others in cases of tribulation or need. (Jas. 1:27; 2:15-17) The apostle John too reasoned: “Whoever has the material possessions of this world and sees his brother in need and yet refuses to show him compassion, in what way does the love of God remain in him?” (1 John 3:17) If individual Christians have such obligations toward the needy, is that not also true of the congregations?



If an accident occurs, how can the congregation help?
(See paragraphs 15, 16)

¹⁵ In some lands, governmental authorities provide pensions, welfare programs, and home-care attendants for senior citizens. (Rom. 13:6) Elsewhere, no such organized services exist. Hence, how much physical assistance relatives and the congregation need to provide for older brothers and sisters varies from situation to situation. If believing children live far from their parents, it may affect how much help the children reasonably are in a position to provide. The children would do well to communicate freely with the elders of their parents’ congregation to make

15. When assisting elderly brothers and sisters, what factors may be involved?

sure that all understand the family's circumstances. For instance, the elders may be able to help out by assisting the parents to learn about and benefit from governmental or social programs locally. They may also observe situations—such as unopened bills or mismanaged medication—that they can bring to the attention of adult children. Such well-motivated and kind interchanges of information can prevent a situation from getting worse and may well lead to practical solutions. Clearly, on-the-spot helpers and advisers, who effectively act as the children's "eyes," may alleviate the worries of a family.

¹⁶ Out of affection for beloved older ones, some Christians have volunteered their time and energy to meet whatever needs they reasonably can. They make it a point to show extra interest in older members of the congregation. Some volunteers divide the tasks with others in the congregation and care for older ones on a rotation basis. While realizing that their own circumstances do not allow them to engage in the full-time ministry, they are happy to assist the children to remain in their chosen careers as long as possible. What an excellent spirit such brothers show! Of course, their generosity does not relieve children of the responsibility to do what they can for their parents.

HONOR OLDER ONES WITH STRENGTHENING WORDS

¹⁷ All involved in the caregiving process can endeavor to make the experience as pleasant as possible. If you have

16. How do some Christians help older members of the congregation?

17, 18. What part does attitude play when it comes to caring for elderly ones?

a role in this, do your utmost to maintain a positive spirit. In some cases, aging causes despondency, even depression. You may thus need to put forth special effort to honor and encourage older brothers and sisters by keeping conversations with them upbuilding. Those who have a good record of dedicated service are to be commended. Jehovah does not forget what they have done to serve him, and neither do fellow Christians.—**Read Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 6:10.**

¹⁸ Additionally, difficult day-to-day arrangements can be made more bearable when the elderly and their caregivers use humor at appropriate times. (Eccl. 3:1, 4) Many of the elderly make a point of not being overly demanding. They realize that the attention and visits they receive may be affected by their disposition. It is not uncommon for visitors to comment, "I went to encourage an older friend, but I left feeling encouraged myself."—Prov. 15:13; 17:22.

¹⁹ We long for the day when suffering and the effects of imperfection will end. In the meantime, God's servants must keep their hope fixed on what is everlasting. We know that faith in God's promises is an anchor in times of distress or tribulation. Thanks to that faith, "we do not give up, but even if the man we are outside is wasting away, certainly the man we are inside is being renewed from day to day." (2 Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 6:18, 19) In addition to maintaining strong faith in God's promises, though, what can help you meet the responsibilities of caregiving? Some practical suggestions will be considered in the following article.

19. What outlook can young and old alike have as to the future?



Providing Care for the Elderly

“Little children, we should love, not in word or with the tongue, but in deed and truth.”—1 JOHN 3:18.

IT CAN be heart-wrenching to realize that your parents, once strong and self-sufficient, are no longer able to look after themselves. Perhaps Mom or Dad has fallen and broken a hip, has become disoriented and wandered off, or has been diagnosed with a serious medical condition. Then there is the other side of the coin. The elderly may find it hard to accept that physical changes or other circumstances now limit their independence. (Job 14:1) What can be done? How can they be looked after?

² One article on care for the elderly states: “While it is difficult to discuss the issues of aging, the family who has discussed the options and agreed on plans will be better able to handle whatever happens.” The value of such a discussion is best appreciated when we acknowledge that trials that come with age cannot be avoided. Still, we can make certain preparations and advance decisions. Let us consider how families may lovingly cooperate to plan to meet some of the challenges.

1, 2. (a) What challenges do many families face, raising what questions? (b) How can parents and children meet the challenges of changing circumstances?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How can parents and their adult children prepare for “the days of distress”?

What situations might indicate that your parents’ needs have changed?

In practical terms, what can you do to assist when someone is caring for an elderly parent?

PLANNING FOR “DAYS OF DISTRESS”

³ The time comes when most elderly people are no longer able to care for themselves fully; they need some assistance. (Read **Ecclesiastes 12:1-7**.) When aged parents can no longer manage on their own, they and their adult children should determine the best kind of help and arrange for affordable solutions. It is usually wise to have a family meeting to discuss cooperation, needs, and strategies. All involved, especially the parents, should express their feelings openly and address the facts realistically. They might discuss whether with additional help the parents can safely remain in their own home.* Or they might consider how each relative’s strengths can be used to care for the responsibilities. (Prov. 24:6) For example, some may be in a position to give day-to-day care while others may be able to provide more financial assistance. All should realize that everyone has a role; however, that role may change as time goes on and some rotation of duties may have to be considered.

⁴ As you begin caregiving, take time to learn as much as you can about your parent’s condition. If he or she is confronted with a degenerative illness, learn what future developments you can expect. (Prov. 1:5) Contact government agencies that provide services for the elderly. Find out what community resources are available to make your task

* What is preferred by parents and children may be dictated by local culture. In some areas, it is normal and even preferred that family members of multiple generations live together or have regular close contact.

3. What may families have to do when elderly parents increasingly need assistance? (See opening image.)

4. Where can family members turn to for help?

easier and the care better. The approaching change in family circumstances may cause you to experience unsettling emotions—feelings of loss, shock, or confusion. Share your thoughts with a trusted friend. Above all, pour out your heart to Jehovah. He can give you the peace of mind you need to deal with any situation.—Ps. 55:22; Prov. 24:10; Phil. 4:6, 7.

⁵ Some older ones and their families wisely collect information ahead of time about care options—such as the practicality of a parent living with a son or a daughter, making use of assisted living facilities, or taking advantage of other possibilities available locally. They have seen potential “trouble and sorrow” from afar and prepare for them. (Ps. 90:10) All too many families do not make plans, and then they are forced to make difficult decisions hurriedly when a crisis occurs. This “is almost invariably the worst possible time to make such a decision,” observes one expert. In that rushed atmosphere, family members may be tense, and conflicts may arise. Long-term planning, on the other hand, makes future adjustments less traumatic.—Prov. 20:18.

⁶ You may find it awkward to talk with your parents about their living arrangements and the possible need for change. Yet, many have said how useful those conversations proved to be later. Why? Because they offered opportunities to make practical plans in an atmosphere of closeness and understanding. They found that an exchange of views in advance, handled in a spirit of love and kindness, made the decisions much eas-

5. Why is it wise to collect information ahead of time about care options for the elderly?

6. How can parents as well as children benefit from a discussion about living arrangements for the elderly?

ier when they had to be made. Even when seniors want to remain by themselves and in control of their own situation as long as possible, there are definite benefits to discussing with their children what kind of care they would prefer if the need arises.

⁷ Parents, during such a discussion, inform your family about your wishes, financial abilities, and preferred options. That will put them in a position to make appropriate decisions if you at some point are not able to do so. Likely, they will want to honor your intentions and preserve your independence as much as possible. (Eph. 6:2-4) For example, do you expect one of your children to invite you to move in with his family, or are you expecting something else? Be realistic and recognize that not all may see things as you do and that it takes time for anyone—whether parent or child—to adjust his thinking.

⁸ All should realize that problems may be avoided by planning and discussions. (Prov. 15:22) That includes discussions about medical care and preferences. The points addressed on the Health Care Proxy that Jehovah's Witnesses use are definitely topics to be covered during these discussions. Each person has the right to be informed about, and to accept or refuse, treatments that may be offered. An advance medical directive states the person's wishes in this regard. Appointing a health-care agent (where legally possible and accepted) can ensure that someone who is trusted will make the appropriate decisions if needed. Those involved will do well to have copies of relevant documents available in case they are needed. Some have included such copies with their will and

7, 8. What topics would families do well to discuss, and why?



A family can meet to discuss how needs can be met
(See paragraphs 6-8)

other important documents about insurance, finance, contacts with government offices, and so on.

COPING WITH CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

⁹ In many cases, parents and children opt to have the elderly maintain as much independence as their abilities and limitations allow. They may be able to cook, clean, manage medication, and communicate without problems. Thus they assure their children that they do not have to be overly involved in their daily life. As time passes, however, if parents become less mobile, perhaps unable to shop, or they begin to suffer from severe memory lapses, children may need to respond to such changes.

¹⁰ Confusion, depression, incontinence, and loss of hearing, sight, and memory may be a result of aging; yet, if some of such health problems appear,

9, 10. What changes in an elderly person's abilities may affect the help provided?

they may well be effectively treated. At the onset of any such issues, seek medical attention. Children may need to take the initiative in this regard. At a certain point, they may also have to start taking the lead in what was previously the parent's realm of personal activities. In order to optimize the care that parents receive, children may have to become their advocates, secretaries, chauffeurs, and so on.—Prov. 3:27.

¹¹ If your parents' problems cannot be resolved, changes may need to be made in their care or living arrangements. The smaller the changes, the easier the adjustment will likely be. In case you live some distance from your parents, might it be sufficient for a fellow Witness or a neighbor to drop by on a regular basis and then let one of the children know how the parents are doing? Do they require help only with cooking and cleaning? Would minor modifications in the home make it easier and safer for them to get around, bathe, and so on? Perhaps all that elderly ones need to maintain the measure of independence they prefer is the help of a home-care attendant. However, if they are not going to be safe on their own, more permanent assistance would be in order. Whatever the situation, investigate what services are available locally.*—**Read Proverbs 21:5.**

HOW SOME MEET THE CHALLENGE

¹² Loving children want their parents to be comfortable. Knowing that they

* If your parent is still living at home, make sure that trusted caregivers have keys that will give them access to the elderly person in case of an emergency.

11. What can be done to minimize the unsettling effects of change?

12, 13. How have adult children who live far away from their parents continued to honor and care for them?

are cared for gives the children a measure of peace of mind. Because of other obligations, however, many grown children do not live near their parents. In such cases, some have used vacations to visit and help care for their needs, doing chores that the parents are not now able to do. Regular phone calls—even daily if possible—letters, or e-mails reassure parents that they are loved.—Prov. 23:24, 25.

¹³ Whatever the situation, the form of day-to-day care provided for your parents needs to be evaluated. If you are not near them and your parents are Witnesses, you can speak with the elders in their congregation, asking for their recommendations. And do not fail to include the matter in your prayers. (**Read Proverbs 11:14.**) Even if your parents are not Witnesses, you want to “honor your father and your mother.” (Ex. 20:12; Prov. 23:22) To be sure, not all families will make the same decisions. Some arrange for an elderly parent to move in with them or closer to them. However, this is not always possible. Some parents prefer not to live with adult children and their families; they value their independence and do not want to be a burden. Some may have the resources—and may prefer—to pay for care while living in their own home.—Eccl. 7:12.

¹⁴ In many families, much of the responsibility of caregiving seems to fall on one son or daughter, the one who lives closest to the parents. Yet, primary caregivers ought to balance their parents' needs with the needs of their own families. There is a limit to each individual's time and energy. And the caregiver's situation might change, making it

14. What problems may arise for primary caregivers?

necessary to review the current arrangements. Is one family member perhaps taking on too many responsibilities? Could the other children do more, such as by taking turns providing care?

¹⁵ When an elderly parent is in constant need, there is a risk of caregiver burnout. (Eccl. 4:6) Loving children want to do what they can for their parents, but unremitting demands can become overwhelming. Caregivers who find themselves in this situation need to be realistic, possibly asking for help. Periodic help may be all that is required to prevent premature recourse to the services of a nursing home.

¹⁶ It is upsetting to see the painful effects of age on beloved parents. Many caregivers experience some sadness, anxiety, frustration, anger, guilt, even resentment. At times, an aged parent may say unkind things or show a lack of gratitude. If that happens, do not be quick to take offense. One mental-health expert says: “The best way to deal with any feeling, especially one with which you are uncomfortable, is to admit it to yourself. Avoid denying the feeling or judging yourself harshly for feeling the way you do.” Talk with your spouse, another family member, or a trusted friend about how you feel. Such conversations can help you put emotional reactions in perspective.

¹⁷ There may come a time when a family has neither the resources nor the expertise to continue caring for a loved one at home. Nursing care may be deemed necessary. One Christian sister visited her mother in a nursing home nearly

15. How can caregiver burnout be prevented?

16, 17. What challenges may children face while caring for aging parents, and how can they cope? (See also the box “Appreciative Caregiving.”)

APPRECIATIVE CAREGIVING

One sister lives a four-hour drive from her parents. Along with her three siblings, she helps care for her elderly parents, one of whom is afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease. She says: “I am struck by the wisdom of Jesus’ words: ‘Never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties. Each day has enough of its own troubles.’ There is nothing we can do to stop the disease. Our goal is to do what we can each day to make Mom and Dad feel as secure as possible. They did so much for us, and I am grateful to be able to care for them now.” Surely Jehovah approves of such sentiments.—Matt. 6:34; Ps. 68:19.

every day. She says of her family: “We just could not provide the 24-hour-a-day care that Mommy needed. Accepting nursing-home care for her was not an easy decision to make. Emotionally, it was very, very hard. However, it was the best solution for her in the last months of her life, and she accepted that.”

¹⁸ The responsibilities of caring for your parents as they age can be complex and emotionally trying. There is no set of right solutions when it comes to providing senior care. Yet, with wise planning, thoughtful cooperation, good communication and, above all, heartfelt prayer, you can fulfill the responsibilities of honoring your loved ones. By doing so, you can have satisfaction in knowing that they are receiving the care and attention they need. **(Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.)** Most important, you can rest assured that you will experience the peace of mind with which Jehovah blesses those who honor their parents.—Phil. 4:7.

18. Of what can caregivers rest assured?

YOUR SPEECH

“ ‘Yes’ and yet ‘No’ ”?

Consider this scenario: An elder who is a member of a Hospital Liaison Committee has arranged to work with a young brother in the field service on Sunday morning. That morning the elder gets an urgent phone call from a brother whose wife has just been in a car accident and was rushed to the hospital. He asks the elder to help him find a doctor who will cooperate on the matter of blood. So the elder cancels his field service arrangement with the young brother in order to provide loving support to a family facing an emergency.

Imagine another scenario: A single mother with two children receives an invitation from a couple in her congregation to spend an evening with them. When she tells her children about it, their faces light up. They eagerly look forward to the evening. However, the day before the visit, the couple tell the mother that something unexpected has come up and that they have to cancel the invitation. She later learns why the couple canceled. After inviting her, the couple were invited by some friends to come to their home that same evening, and they accepted.

As Christians we should, of course, keep our word. We should never find ourselves saying, as it were, “ ‘yes’ and yet ‘no.’ ” (2 Cor. 1:18) However, as the two examples illustrate, not all situations are the same. There may be times when it seems that we have no choice but to cancel an arrangement we have made. The apostle Paul once found himself in such a situation.

PAUL ACCUSED OF FICKLENESS

In 55 C.E., while Paul was in Ephesus during his third missionary tour, he intended to cross the Aegean Sea to Corinth and from there travel on to Macedonia. On his way back to Jerusalem, he planned to visit the Corinthian congregation a second time, evidently to collect their kind gift for the brothers in Jerusalem. (1 Cor. 16:3) This is clear from 2 Corinthians 1:15, 16, where we read: “With this confidence, I was intending to come first to you, so that you might have a second occasion for joy; for I intended to visit you on my way to Macedonia, to return to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me off to Judea.”

It appears that Paul in a previous letter had informed the Corinthian brothers of his plan. (1 Cor. 5:9) Shortly after writing that letter, however, Paul heard through the



household of Chloe that there were serious dissensions in the congregation. (1 Cor. 1: 10, 11) Paul decided to adjust his original plan, and he wrote the letter that we now know as 1 Corinthians. In it Paul lovingly provided counsel and correction. He also mentioned that he had changed his itinerary, informing them that he would first go to Macedonia and then to Corinth.—1 Cor. 16:5, 6.*

It seems that when the brothers in Corinth received his letter, some of the “superfine apostles” in that congregation accused him of being fickle, of not keeping his promises. In his defense Paul asked: “Well, when I had such an intention, I did not view the matter lightly, did I? Or do I purpose things in a fleshly way, so that I am saying ‘Yes, yes’ and then ‘No, no?’” —2 Cor. 1:17; 11:5.

We might ask, In these circumstances was the apostle Paul really ‘viewing the matter lightly’? Of course not! The word translated “lightly” has the sense of fickleness, as if a person was unreliable, not keeping his promises. Paul’s rhetorical question “do I purpose things in a fleshly way?” should have made it clear to the Christians in Corinth that Paul’s decision to change his plans was not because he was unreliable.

Paul emphatically refuted the accusation, writing: “But God can be relied on that what we say to you is not ‘yes’ and yet ‘no.’” (2 Cor. 1:18) Certainly, Paul had the best interests of his brothers and sisters in Corinth at heart when he changed his arrangements. At 2 Corinthians 1:23, we read that ‘it was to spare them’ that he changed his original plan to go to Corinth. Indeed, he had given them an opportuni-

ty to put things straight *before* being with them in person. As he had hoped, while he was in Macedonia, Paul heard from Titus that his letter had indeed moved them to sorrow and repentance, which gave him great joy.—2 Cor. 6:11; 7:5-7.

THE “AMEN” SAID TO GOD

The accusation of fickleness might have implied that if Paul could not be relied on to keep his promises in everyday life, neither could he be trusted in his preaching work. However, Paul reminded the Corinthians that he had preached Jesus Christ to them. “The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you through us, that is, through me and Silvanus and Timothy, did not become ‘yes’ and yet ‘no,’ but ‘yes’ has become ‘yes’ in his case.” (2 Cor. 1:19) Was Paul’s exemplar, Jesus Christ, in any way unreliable? No! Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus always spoke the truth. (John 14:6; 18:37) If what Jesus preached was completely true and reliable and Paul preached the same message, then the apostle’s preaching was reliable too.

Of course, Jehovah is “the God of truth.” (Ps. 31:5) We see this from what Paul next writes: “No matter how many the promises of God are, they have become ‘yes’ by means of him,” that is, by means of Christ. Jesus’ flawless integrity while on earth cleared up any possible cause for doubt concerning Jehovah’s promises. Paul continues: “Therefore, also through him [Jesus] is the ‘Amen’ said to God, which brings him glory through us.” (2 Cor. 1: 20) Jesus is the personal guarantee, or the “Amen,” that every promise Jehovah God makes will come true!

Just as Jehovah and Jesus always speak the truth, so Paul always meant what he said. (2 Cor. 1:19) He was not fickle, one who made promises “in a fleshly way.”

* A short time after writing 1 Corinthians, Paul did indeed travel via Troas to Macedonia, where he wrote 2 Corinthians. (2 Cor. 2:12; 7:5) Later on, he did visit Corinth.

(2 Cor. 1:17) Rather, he ‘walked by spirit.’ (Gal. 5:16) In his dealings with others, he had their best interests at heart. His Yes meant Yes!

DOES YOUR YES MEAN YES?

Nowadays, it is common for people who do not live according to Bible principles to make promises and then break them if a minor problem arises or something more appealing turns up. In business matters “yes” does not always mean “yes,” even when agreements have been confirmed in writing. Many no longer view marriage, an agreement between two parties, as a life-long commitment. Rather, the skyrocketing divorce rate shows that many view marriage as a casual union that can easily be abandoned.—2 Tim. 3:1, 2.

What about you? Does *your* Yes mean Yes? True, as considered in the opening part of this article, it may happen that you have to cancel an appointment, not because of fickleness on your part, but because of circumstances beyond your control. But if you as a Christian make a promise or a commitment, you really should do all you can to keep it. (Ps. 15:4; Matt. 5:37) If you do, you will become known as someone who is trustworthy, a person of your word, one who consistently speaks the truth. (Eph. 4:15, 25; Jas. 5:12) When people realize that you can be trusted in everyday matters, they may be more willing to listen when you share with them the truth about God’s Kingdom. Therefore, let us make sure that our Yes really means Yes!

