

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

OCTOBER 26–NOVEMBER 1

Are You Reaching
the Stature That
Belongs to Christ?

PAGE 3

NOVEMBER 2-8

Is Your Conscience
a Reliable Guide?

PAGE 8

NOVEMBER 9-15

“Stand Firm
in the Faith”

PAGE 13

NOVEMBER 16-22

In What Ways Does
Jehovah Love Us?

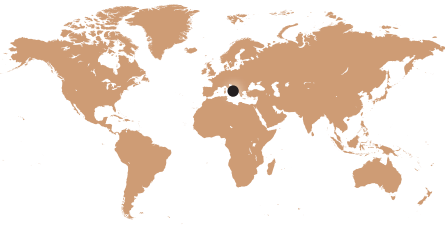
PAGE 18

NOVEMBER 23-29

How Can We Show
That We Love
Jehovah?

PAGE 23





ITALY

COVER: Italian publishers from the Chinese congregation speaking to tourists visiting the city of Rome. Our mobile displays near famous monuments attract hundreds of people every month

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STUDY ARTICLES

- **Are You Reaching the Stature That Belongs to Christ?**
- **Is Your Conscience a Reliable Guide?**

God's servants should strive to grow spiritually, with the goal of reaching spiritual maturity. They should also train their God-given conscience. These articles provide a practical guide in both areas, discussing aspects of life where maturity and the conscience come into play.

- **“Stand Firm in the Faith”**

We can learn vital lessons about faith from Peter's attempt to walk on the Sea of Galilee. This article will help us to identify potential weaknesses in our faith and show how we can strengthen it.

- **In What Ways Does Jehovah Love Us?**
- **How Can We Show That We Love Jehovah?**

Knowing that we are loved by Jehovah and reciprocating that love bring us the greatest satisfaction and happiness in life. In these two articles, we will consider ways in which Jehovah shows his love for us and how we can show our love for him.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

28 Jehovah's Blessing Has Enriched My Life

THE WATCHTOWER®
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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Are You Reaching the Stature That Belongs to Christ?

“Attain . . . the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ.”—EPH. 4:13.

WHEN an experienced housewife selects fresh fruit at the market, she does not always choose the biggest pieces or the least expensive ones. Rather, she looks for items that are ripe. She wants fruit that has good taste and aroma and that offers healthy nutrients. Yes, she selects fruit that has reached a full state of growth, that is mature.

² After a person has progressed to dedication and baptism, he continues to grow. His goal is to become a mature servant of God. The maturity we are speaking of is not physical but spiritual. The apostle Paul wrote of the need for Christians in Ephesus to grow spiritually. He encouraged them to reach out to “attain to the oneness of the faith and of the accurate knowledge of the Son of God, to being a full-grown man, attaining the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ.”—Eph. 4:13.

³ When Paul wrote his letter, the congregation in Ephesus

- 1, 2. What sort of growth should every Christian strive for? Illustrate.
3. What situation in the Ephesian congregation can also be found among Jehovah’s people today?

SONGS: 69, 70

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

How do mature Christians benefit from accurate knowledge?

Mature Christians can have what impact on the unity of the congregation?

How can the right associates be of benefit to those who want to become mature Christians?

had already existed for some years. Many disciples there had reached a high level of spiritual development. Some, however, still needed to press on to maturity. The situation among Jehovah's Witnesses today is much the same. Many brothers and sisters have long served God and have advanced to spiritual maturity. But obviously not all are at that point. For example, thousands of new ones are baptized each year, so some still need to strive for maturity. What about you?—Col. 2:6, 7.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

⁴ When you examine ripe fruit at the market, you see that not all the pieces are identical. Yet, they do share some characteristics that identify them as being ripe. Similarly, mature Christians may be of different nationality, background, health, age, and experience. There are even differences in personality or culture. Still, all who grow spiritually develop qualities that identify them as being mature. How so?

⁵ A mature servant of Jehovah builds his life around the example of Jesus, who left a model for us “to follow his steps closely.” (1 Pet. 2:21) What did Jesus highlight as being very important? Loving Jehovah with all one's heart, soul, and mind, and loving one's neighbor as oneself. (Matt. 22:37-39) A mature Christian strives to live in harmony with that counsel. He has established a life pattern that shows that he gives priority to his relationship with Jehovah and he displays self-sacrificing love for others.

4, 5. In what ways may mature Christians differ from one another, but what do they all have in common? (See opening image.)

⁶ We understand, though, that love is just one aspect of the fruitage of the spirit that a mature Christian displays. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Other aspects—such as mildness, self-control, and patience—are important too. They can help him to handle difficult situations without becoming irritated and to endure heartbreaking disappointments without losing hope. In his program of personal study, he continually searches for Scriptural principles that can help him to distinguish right from wrong. Thereafter, when he makes decisions, he gives evidence of spiritual maturity. For instance, he listens to his Bible-trained conscience. The mature Christian shows humility in that he recognizes that Jehovah's ways and standards are always better than his own.* He zealously preaches the good news and contributes to the unity of the congregation.

⁷ No matter how long we have been serving Jehovah, each of us can ask, ‘Are there areas where I yet should model myself more closely after Jesus, thus continuing to progress spiritually?’

“SOLID FOOD BELONGS TO MATURE PEOPLE”

⁸ Jesus Christ had an excellent grasp of God's Word. Even when he was just 12 years old, he was able to discuss Scriptural matters with teachers in the tem-

* For example, older, experienced brothers may be asked to step aside from certain responsibilities and to lend support to younger brothers as they take on those responsibilities.

6, 7. (a) What are some qualities that identify a mature Christian? (b) What will we consider?

8. What can be said about Jesus' knowledge of the Scriptures and his understanding of them?

Older Christians can reflect Christlike humility by supporting younger ones now taking the lead
(See paragraph 6)



ple. “All those listening to him were in constant amazement at his understanding and his answers.” (Luke 2:46, 47) Later, during his earthly ministry, Jesus silenced his opponents with appropriate references to God’s Word.—Matt. 22:41-46.

⁹ In line with the model Jesus provided, a Christian who wants to grow spiritually will not be satisfied with a superficial knowledge of the Bible. He will regularly dig deeply into its contents, realizing that “solid food belongs to mature people.” (Heb. 5:14) Clearly, a mature Christian wants to have “accurate knowledge of the Son of God.” (Eph. 4:13) Do you schedule daily Bible reading? Do you follow a routine of personal

9. (a) What Bible study habits are important for someone who wants to grow spiritually?
(b) What is the purpose of Bible study?

study, making every effort to set aside time each week for family worship? As you consider God’s Word, be alert to Scriptural principles that will help you to see more clearly how Jehovah thinks and feels. Then try to apply Bible principles, relying on them when you make decisions, thus drawing ever closer to Jehovah.

¹⁰ A mature Christian understands that more is involved than knowledge. In addition to what he knows, how much does he *love* what he knows of God’s ways and principles? One reflection of such love is the setting of priorities in life that are in accord with Jehovah’s will rather than human inclinations. Moreover, the Christian has no doubt worked to “put away” his former attitudes and conduct.

10. How does a mature Christian’s knowledge influence him in everyday life?

As a Christian makes that change, he puts on the new Christlike personality, which is “created according to God’s will in true righteousness and loyalty.” **(Read Ephesians 4:22-24.)** The Bible was written under the direction of God’s holy spirit. While a Christian deepens his knowledge of and love for the Bible’s standards, he opens his heart and mind to the influence of holy spirit. That contributes to spiritual growth.

JOINED TOGETHER IN UNITY

¹¹ During his life on earth as a perfect man, Jesus was surrounded by imperfect humans. He was raised by imperfect parents, and he spent years at home with imperfect relatives. Even his closest followers were influenced by the ambitious, manipulative spirit common around them. For example, on the evening before Jesus was executed, there “arose a heated dispute among them over which one of them was considered to be the greatest.” (Luke 22:24) But Jesus was confident that his imperfect followers could grow spiritually and form a united congregation. That same evening, Jesus prayed for the loving unity of his apostles, asking his heavenly Father: “May [they] all be one, just as you, Father, are in union with me and I am in union with you, that they also may be in union with us, . . . in order that they may be one just as we are one.”—John 17: 21, 22.

¹² A mature servant of Jehovah promotes unity within the congregation.

11. Jesus experienced what in his dealings with his family and his disciples?

12, 13. (a) How does Ephesians 4:15, 16 highlight the need to promote unity in the congregation? (b) How did one brother overcome a weakness and thus learn to work toward unity?

(Read Ephesians 4:1-6, 15, 16.) It is our goal that God’s people be “harmoniously joined together” and that all members cooperate with one another. According to Jehovah’s Word, to achieve this unity, we need humility. A mature brother or sister has the humility to work for unity, even when facing the imperfections of others. How do you react when confronted with the imperfection of a brother or sister in the congregation? Or what if you personally are wronged by someone in the congregation? Is it your inclination, or even your pattern, to build a wall, so to speak, that separates you from the offender? Or do you try to construct a bridge across the gap between the two of you? A mature Christian wants to—yes, strives to—build bridges, not walls.

¹³ Consider the example of Uwe. In the past, he tended to let the imperfections of fellow believers upset him. Then he decided to use the Bible and *Insight on the Scriptures* to study the life of David. Why David? Uwe explains: “David witnessed the unscriptural behavior of some fellow believers. For example, King Saul tried to kill him, some of the people wanted to stone him, and even David’s own wife mocked him. (1 Sam. 19:9-11; 30:1-6; 2 Sam. 6:14-22) But David never allowed the conduct of others to dampen his love for Jehovah. Also, David had a merciful heart, something I needed to cultivate. What I learned through my study changed my view of the imperfections of fellow believers. I no longer keep a chronicle of mistakes. Rather, I strive to contribute to the unity of the congregation.” Do you likewise have the goal of promoting unity in the congregation?

FRIENDS AMONG THOSE DOING GOD'S WILL

¹⁴ Jesus Christ was friendly toward people in general. Individuals of all sorts felt at ease in his company—men, women, young, old, even children. But in choosing close friends, Jesus was selective. He said to his faithful apostles: “You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you.” (John 15:14) Jesus chose such friends from among those who loyally followed him and served Jehovah wholeheartedly. Do you similarly select your close friends from among those who serve Jehovah unreservedly? Why is this important?

¹⁵ Many types of fruit ripen best in warm sunlight. Similarly, the warmth of our brotherhood can help you to progress to maturity. Perhaps you are a young person who is trying to decide what course you will pursue in life. How wise you are if you associate with fellow believers who have considerable experience in serving Jehovah and in contributing to the unity of the congregation! Over the years, they may have had some ups and downs in life and may even have faced challenges in serving God. Such ones can help you to choose the best way of life. Warm, upbuilding association with such brothers and sisters can help you to make your own wise decisions and to press on to maturity.

—**Read Hebrews 5:14.**

¹⁶ Helga, for instance, recalls that

14. Jesus chose what sort of individuals as his friends?

15. How can young ones benefit from association with mature Christians?

16. How did older ones in the congregation help one young sister?

during her final year at school, the students in her class were comparing their personal goals. Many of them were reaching out for a university education as a stepping-stone to what they hoped would be a promising career. Helga discussed the situation with friends in her congregation. “Many of them were older than I was,” she relates, “and they helped me a lot. They encouraged me to take up the full-time ministry. Thereafter, I was able to spend five years in the pioneer service. Now, years later, I am happy that I focused much of my youth on Jehovah’s service. I have no reason to regret having done so.”

¹⁷ Trying to focus our lives on the example Jesus set will help us in our Christian growth. We will draw closer to Jehovah, and we will grow in our desire to serve him to the greatest extent possible. A servant of God can give Jehovah his best when he has reached full spiritual growth, when he is a mature Christian. Jesus encouraged his followers: “Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens.”—Matt. 5:16.

¹⁸ As noted, a mature Christian can be a powerful influence for good in the congregation. And such spiritual maturity is reflected in how a Christian uses his God-given conscience. How can our conscience help us to make wise decisions? And how can we respect the conscientious decisions of fellow believers? We will consider these points in the following article.

17, 18. How can spiritual maturity help us to fulfill our purpose in life?



Is Your Conscience a Reliable Guide?

“The objective of this instruction is love out of a clean heart and out of a good conscience.”

—1 TIM. 1:5.

SONGS: 57, 48

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How can our conscience come into play as to health care?

Of what value can our conscience be as a guide with regard to recreation?

Our conscience can move us to perform what good works?

JEHOVAH GOD created humans with free will, that is, the liberty to choose between one option and another. God provided a valuable guide for the first man and woman and their future offspring—the conscience, an inner sense of right and wrong. Used properly, the conscience can help us to do good and to avoid wrongdoing. Our conscience thus is an evidence of God’s love for us and of his desire that humans be united in doing good.

² Today, humans still have the faculty of conscience. (**Read Romans 2:14, 15.**) Though many have strayed far from the Bible’s standards of conduct, we find that some individuals often do what is good and abhor what is bad. The conscience holds many individuals back from committing deeds of extreme wickedness. Imagine how much worse world conditions would be if no one had a conscience! We would likely hear of even more evil than we do now. How grateful we can be that

1, 2. Who is the Source of our conscience, and why can we be thankful that we have this faculty?

God has provided humans with a conscience!

³ Unlike people in general, servants of Jehovah want to train their conscience. They want the proddings of their conscience to agree with the standards of right and wrong, good and bad, as reflected in God's Word. A properly trained conscience exercises a powerful influence for good in the Christian congregation. However, training and using our Christian conscience is not just a mental activity. The Bible links a good conscience to faith and love. Paul wrote: "The objective of this instruction is love out of a clean heart and out of a good conscience and out of faith without hypocrisy." (1 Tim. 1:5) As we train our conscience and respond to it, our love for Jehovah will deepen and our faith will be strengthened. In fact, the way we use our conscience reveals the depth of our spirituality, the quality of our heart, and the intensity of our desire to please Jehovah. Indeed, this inner voice reflects what sort of person we truly are.

⁴ But how can we train our conscience? Key ways are by regularly and prayerfully studying the Bible, meditating on what we read, and then putting into practice what we have learned. Obviously, this involves more than accumulating facts and learning rules. Our study of the Bible should gradually give us an ever more precise picture of Jehovah, his personality, his qualities, and what he likes or dislikes. Our conscience becomes attuned to the ways of Jehovah God. This should stir our heart, moving us to want to become more and more like him.

3. Why is the conscience a powerful force for good in the Christian congregation?

4. How can we train our conscience?

⁵ However, we might ask: How can a well-trained conscience help us when we need to make decisions? How can we respect the conscientious decision of a fellow believer? And how can our conscience move us to greater works of zeal? With those questions in mind, let us consider three areas in which our conscience can be a positive factor: (1) health care, (2) recreation, and (3) the ministry.

BE REASONABLE

⁶ The Bible encourages us to avoid harmful practices and to be moderate in habits, such as in eating and drinking. (Prov. 23:20; 2 Cor. 7:1) As we apply Bible principles, we will be safeguarding our health to a degree, even if advancing age and infirmity may still affect us. In some lands, both conventional medicine and a range of alternative therapies are available. Branch offices regularly receive letters from brothers and sisters who are considering one form of treatment or another. Many ask, "Can a servant of Jehovah accept such treatment?"

⁷ Neither a branch office nor the local congregation elders are authorized to make health-care decisions for a Witness, even if he asks what to do. (Gal. 6:5) They can, of course, call attention to what Jehovah has said that may have a bearing on the decision. For example, a Christian needs to remember the Biblical command "to keep abstaining from . . . blood." (Acts 15:29) That would clearly rule out medical treatments that

5. What will we consider in this article?

6. What is one field in which questions arise and decisions must be made?

7. How can we make decisions about medical treatments?

involve taking in whole blood or any of its four major components. This knowledge could even influence a Christian's conscience when he makes a personal decision regarding minor fractions derived from one of those four components.* But what other Bible advice can guide us when we are contemplating medical treatment?

⁸ Proverbs 14:15 says: "The naive person believes every word, but the shrewd one ponders each step." For some illnesses, there may be no known cure. So it is wise to be cautious when it comes to treatments that feature stunning claims but that are promoted merely with hearsay testimonials. Paul was inspired to write: "Let your reasonableness become known to all men." (Phil. 4:5) Reasonableness also holds us back from devoting

* See "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of June 15, 2004, pp. 29-31.

8. How can Philippians 4:5 help us with regard to health care?

so much time to health care that spiritual matters are forced into the background. Were we to allow health care to become the main focus of our life, we would run the risk of becoming self-centered. (Phil. 2:4) Spiritual matters are most important, and with regard to health, our expectations should remain reasonable.

—**Read Philippians 1:10.**

⁹ A Christian who is reasonable does not impose his views on others. In one European land, a married couple were zealously advocating certain food supplements and a diet. They persuaded some brothers to use the supplements, but others chose not to. In time, the results fell short of expectations, and there was widespread resentment. The couple had a right to choose *for themselves* whether they would follow a certain diet and take the supplements, but was it reasonable to put the unity of the congregation at risk over health care? For a time, Christians in ancient Rome had differing opinions with regard to eating certain foods and observing certain days. What advice did Paul give them? Regarding the latter, he said: "One man judges one day as above another; another judges one day the same as all others; let each one be fully convinced in his own mind." It was important not to put a stumbling block before others.—**Read Romans 14:5, 13, 15, 19, 20.**

¹⁰ If we cannot understand the conscientious decision of a fellow believer on some personal matter, we should not quickly judge him or feel that we ought to

9. How does Romans 14:13, 19 have a bearing on decisions about health, and how might our unity be put at risk?

10. Why should we respect the personal decisions of others? (See opening image.)

Do you impose your views on others?
(See paragraph 9)



pressure him to change his mind. Perhaps his conscience is still “weak” and in need of more training or is too sensitive on certain issues. (1 Cor. 8:11, 12) On the other hand, it may be that we need to examine our own conscience, which may need further training in line with divine principles. On matters like health care, each of us should be willing to make a personal decision and accept the responsibility that comes with it.

ENJOY UPBUILDING RECREATION

¹¹ Jehovah created humans in a way that makes it possible for them to enjoy and benefit from recreation. Solomon wrote that there is “a time to laugh” and “a time to dance.” (Eccl. 3:4) But not every pastime is beneficial, relaxing, or refreshing; nor is it good to engage in recreation too much or too often. How can our conscience help us to enjoy upbuilding recreation and benefit from it?

¹² The Scriptures warn against certain behavior identified as “the works of the flesh.” These works include “sexual immorality, uncleanness, brazen conduct, idolatry, spiritism, hostility, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, dissensions, divisions, sects, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and things like these.” Paul wrote that “those who practice such things will not inherit God’s Kingdom.” (Gal. 5:19-21) Accordingly, we can ask ourselves: ‘Does my conscience move me to shun sports that are aggressive, competitive, nationalistic, or violent? Does my inner voice warn me when I am tempted to view a film that features pornographic scenes or one that condones immorality, drunkenness, or spiritism?’

11, 12. When choosing recreation, what Bible counsel should we keep in mind?

¹³ The Bible also provides principles that can help us mold our conscience with regard to recreation. One is that “physical training is beneficial for a little.” (1 Tim. 4:8) Many have concluded that a measure of regular exercise promotes good health and refreshes the body and mind. If we want to enjoy exercise in a group, should we share in it with just anyone? Proverbs 13:20 tells us: “The one walking with the wise will become wise, but the one who has dealings with the stupid will fare badly.” Does this not suggest that we should be selective in our choice of recreation, guided by our Bible-trained conscience?

¹⁴ Christian and Daniela are the parents of two teenagers. Christian relates: “During our Family Worship evening, we discussed recreation. We agreed that some ways of having fun are acceptable whereas others are not. Who can be considered good association? One of our daughters complained that during recess at her school, some Witness youths behave in a way that she thought was not proper. And she felt under pressure to behave in the same way. We reasoned that each of us has a conscience, and we ought to be guided by it in choosing what we do and with whom.”—**Read Romans 14:2-4.**

¹⁵ There is also the question of when to engage in recreation. Do you plan recreation around theocratic activities, such as meetings, field ministry, and personal study? Or do you find yourself trying to fit theocratic activities between periods

13. How can the advice at 1 Timothy 4:8 and Proverbs 13:20 help us with regard to recreation?

14. How did one youth act in harmony with Romans 14:2-4?

15. How can considering Matthew 6:33 be of help when planning recreation?

of leisure? What are your priorities? Jesus said: “Keep on, then, seeking first the Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.” (Matt. 6:33) Does your conscience prompt you to set priorities that line up with Jesus’ advice?

MOTIVATED TO ZEALOUS WORKS

¹⁶ A good conscience does much more than warn us against wrongdoing. It moves us to do good works. Foremost among these good works is our participation in the ministry from house to house and our taking advantage of opportunities to witness informally. Paul’s conscience moved him to do so. He wrote: “Necessity is laid upon me. Really, woe to me if I do not declare the good news!” (1 Cor. 9:16) As we imitate him, our conscience speaks to us, assuring us that we are doing the right thing. And by preaching the good news, we appeal to the conscience of those to whom we speak. Paul said: “By making the truth manifest, we recommend ourselves to every human conscience in the sight of God.”—2 Cor. 4:2.

16. Our conscience can have what bearing on our preaching?

¹⁷ When Jacqueline was 16 years old, she studied biology in school. The theory of evolution was explained in some detail. “My conscience would not let me share as fully in class discussions as I normally did. I could not support the theory of evolution. I approached the teacher and explained my position. To my surprise, he was very friendly and offered me the chance to speak to the whole class on the subject of creation.” Jacqueline felt deep inner satisfaction at having listened to and acted in line with her Bible-trained conscience. Does your conscience similarly move you to do what is right?

¹⁸ How fine it is when our goal is to bring our lives ever more into harmony with Jehovah’s standards and ways! To that end, the conscience can be an invaluable tool. By regularly immersing ourselves in God’s Word, meditating on what we find, and striving to put it into practice, we train our conscience. It will thus prove to be a valuable asset in our Christian life!

17. How did one young sister act in harmony with her conscience?

18. Why should we be interested in having a good, reliable conscience?



Your Bible-trained conscience can help you to avoid dangers
(See paragraph 14)



“Stand Firm in the Faith”

“Stand firm in the faith, . . . grow mighty.”

—1 COR. 16:13.

THE apostle Peter and some other disciples are struggling to row their boat across the Sea of Galilee during a nighttime windstorm. Suddenly, they see Jesus walking on the sea. Peter calls out to Jesus, asking if he could walk across the water to his Master. When Jesus tells him to come, Peter gets out of the boat and miraculously walks toward Jesus on the choppy surface. Moments later, though, Peter starts to sink. Why? He looked at the windstorm and became afraid. Peter cries out to Jesus, who quickly catches hold of him and says: “You with *little faith*, why did you give way to doubt?”—Matt. 14:24-32.

² Let us consider three aspects of Peter’s experience related to faith: (1) how Peter first showed faith in God’s support, (2) why Peter began to lose faith, and (3) what helped Peter to regain his faith. Examining these points can help us to see how we can “stand firm in the faith.”—1 Cor. 16:13.

1. (a) What experience did Peter have during a windstorm on the Sea of Galilee? (See opening image.) (b) Why did Peter start to sink?
2. What will we now consider?

SONGS: 60, 64

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why is faith a precious possession?

How can we tell if our faith has begun to weaken?

Why can we strengthen our faith by looking intently at Jesus?

FAITH IN GOD'S SUPPORT

³ When Peter climbed out of the boat to walk on the water, he did so in faith. Jesus had called him, and Peter trusted that God's power would support him just as it was supporting Jesus. Similarly, when we dedicated ourselves to Jehovah and got baptized, we did so because of our faith. Jesus called us to be his followers, to walk in his footsteps. We had to exercise faith in both Jesus and God, trusting that they would support us in various ways.—John 14:1; **read 1 Peter 2:21.**

⁴ Faith is truly a precious possession. Just as Peter's faith enabled him to walk on water, our faith enables us to do things that from a human standpoint may seem impossible. (Matt. 21:21, 22) For instance, many of us have changed our attitudes and practices so drastically that we are almost unrecognizable to those who knew us before. Jehovah supported our efforts because we took these steps based on our faith in him. **(Read Colossians 3:5-10.)** Once our faith moved us to dedicate ourselves to Jehovah, we became his friends, something we could never have done in our own power.—Eph. 2:8.

⁵ Our faith continues to empower us. In faith we are able to resist the attacks of our superhuman adversary, the Devil. (Eph. 6:16) In addition, trust in Jehovah helps us to minimize our anxiety during challenging times. Jehovah says that when our faith moves us to put Kingdom interests first, he will provide for our material needs. (Matt. 6:30-34) More than

3. Why did Peter climb out of the boat, and how have we done something similar?

4, 5. Why is faith a precious possession?

that, because of our faith, we will receive a gift no human could ever obtain by his own efforts—everlasting life.—John 3:16.

LOSS OF FOCUS CAN LEAD TO LOSS OF FAITH

⁶ The wind and waves surrounding Peter as he walked on the water might be compared to the trials and temptations we face in our life of dedication to God. Even when these are severe, we can stand firm with Jehovah's support. Recall that Peter did not sink because of a gust of wind or a big wave. Think back on the sequence of events: "Looking at the windstorm, he became afraid." (Matt. 14:30) Peter lost his focus on Jesus, and then his faith wavered. We could begin to sink if we were to begin "looking at the windstorm," focusing on its power and doubting that Jehovah will support us.

⁷ We should take seriously the possibility that our faith could diminish, for the Bible refers to a weakening of faith or loss of faith as "the sin that *easily* entangles us." (Heb. 12:1) As Peter's experience shows, our faith can quickly weaken if we focus on the wrong things. How can we tell whether we are in danger of that happening? Consider some questions that we can use to examine ourselves.

⁸ *Do God's promises seem less real to me now than they once did?* For instance, God has promised to destroy the present sys-

6, 7. (a) To what might we compare the storm and waves that surrounded Peter? (b) Why should we take seriously the possibility that our faith could diminish?

8. How might God's promises seem less real to us than they once did?



By focusing on Jesus' example and following his footsteps closely, we can be made firm in the faith
(See paragraph 15)

tem of things. Yet, are we distracted by the world's array of entertainment options, thus weakening our faith in God's promise? We might start to doubt that the end is really near. (Hab. 2:3) Here is another example. God promises to forgive us on the basis of the ransom. If, though, we became obsessed with guilt over our past mistakes, we could begin to doubt whether Jehovah has really "blotted out" all our sins. (Acts 3:19) Consequently, we could lose our joy in God's service and become inactive.

⁹ *Am I as diligent in God's service as I once was?* The apostle Paul showed that working hard for Jehovah leads to our having "the full assurance of the hope down to the end." However, what could happen if we began to focus our efforts

on personal pursuits, such as by taking a job that pays well but that interferes with our worship? Our faith could weaken, and we could "become sluggish," doing less for Jehovah than our circumstances allow.—Heb. 6:10-12.

¹⁰ *Do I struggle to forgive personal offenses?* When others offend or hurt us, we could focus on how we feel and then be tempted to tell them off or to cut them off by not speaking to them. On the other hand, if we forgive, we show our faith in Jehovah. How so? Those who sin against us owe us a debt, just as our sins put us in debt to God. (Luke 11:4) When we forgive others, we have to trust that gaining God's favor by doing so is worth more than making them pay back their debt. Jesus' disciples recognized that

9. What could happen if we focused on personal pursuits?

10. How do we demonstrate faith in Jehovah when we forgive others?

forgiving others requires faith. When he told them to forgive even those who had sinned against them repeatedly, they begged: “Give us more faith.”—Luke 17: 1-5.

¹¹ *Do I chafe at Scriptural counsel?* Instead of looking for a way to benefit from the counsel, we might be focusing on some defect in the counsel or in the counselor. (Prov. 19:20) We might thus miss an opportunity to bring our thinking into line with God’s.

¹² *Do I murmur against appointed brothers in the congregation?* When the Israelites focused on the bad report of the ten faithless spies, they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron. Jehovah then asked Moses: “How much longer will they not put faith *in me*?” (Num. 14:2-4, 11) Yes, the Israelites’ murmuring actually showed a lack of trust in God, who had appointed Moses and Aaron. Likewise, if we constantly grumble about those whom God is using to lead his people, is this not an indication that our faith in God has weakened?

¹³ Still, do not be disheartened if your self-examination exposes weaknesses in your faith. Even Peter, an apostle, gave way to fear and doubt. In fact, Jesus at times reproved all the apostles for having “little faith.” (Matt. 16:8) Keep in mind that an important lesson we learn from Peter’s experience comes from what he did *after* his faith wavered and he started to sink into the sea.

11. Why might we fail to benefit from Scriptural counsel?

12. A person who constantly grumbles about those whom Jehovah is using to lead his people gives evidence of what?

13. Why should we not be disheartened if we detect some weaknesses in our faith?

FOCUS ON JESUS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH

¹⁴ When Peter looked at the storm and started to sink, he could have tried to make it back to the boat on his own. He was an able swimmer, so this might even have been his natural response. (John 21:7) Yet, instead of relying on himself, he refocused on Jesus and accepted Jesus’ help. If we sense that our faith is weakening, we should imitate Peter’s example. But how can we do that?

¹⁵ Just as Peter refocused on Jesus, we too must “look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus.” (**Read Hebrews 12:2, 3.**) Of course, we cannot literally see Jesus as Peter did. Instead, we “look intently” at Jesus by examining his teachings and actions and then following these closely. Consider some steps we can take based on the model Jesus set. If we put these into practice, we will receive the help we need to make our faith firm.

¹⁶ *Strengthen your confidence in the Bible.* Jesus was convinced that the Bible is God’s Word, which provides the best guidance in life. (John 17:17) Following Jesus’ example, we must read the Bible daily, study it, and meditate on what we learn. Along with general Bible study, dig into topics about which you may have questions. To illustrate, you might increase your conviction that the end of this system of things really is near by studying in detail the Scriptural proof that we live in the last days. Strengthen your trust in the Bible’s promises for the

14, 15. (a) What did Peter do when he started to sink? (b) We cannot actually see Jesus, so how can we “look intently” at him?

16. How can we study the Bible in a way that builds our faith?

future by investigating its many prophecies that have already come true. Develop your confidence in the practical value of the Bible by considering examples of how the Bible improves people's lives.* —1 Thess. 2:13.

¹⁷ *Focus on the blessings Jehovah has promised.* By fixing his sights on “the joy that was set before him,” Jesus was able to remain faithful despite extreme tests. (Heb. 12:2) He was never distracted by what the world could offer. (Matt. 4:8-10) You can imitate Jesus by meditating on the wonderful promises Jehovah has made to you. Put yourself in the picture by writing down or making a drawing of what you hope to do once God has removed this wicked system. Make a list of people whom you look forward to meeting when they are resurrected and what you would like to discuss with them. See these as God's promises not just to mankind in general but to you personally.

¹⁸ *Pray for more faith.* Jesus taught his disciples to ask Jehovah for holy spirit. (Luke 11:9, 13) As you do this, pray for more faith; it is an aspect of the fruitage of the spirit. Be specific in your request, asking God to help you overcome any trait that you may have found that indicates a weakening of faith, such as an inability to forgive.

¹⁹ *Associate with people of faith.* Jesus chose his friends carefully, especially those whom he welcomed into his inner

* For instance, see the series “The Bible Changes Lives” in the public edition of *The Watchtower*.

17. Why was Jesus able to remain faithful despite extreme tests, and how can you imitate him?

18. How can prayer help to strengthen your faith?

19. What should we look for in a friend?

circle. His closest companions, the apostles, had proved their faith and loyalty by obeying his commands. **(Read John 15: 14, 15.)** So when choosing your friends, look for people who show their faith by their obedience to Jesus. And remember that one sign of a good friendship is open communication, even when this calls for giving or accepting counsel.—Prov. 27:9.

²⁰ *Help others strengthen their faith.* By both word and deed, Jesus built up the faith of his disciples. (Mark 11:20-24) We should follow his example because helping others build up their faith also strengthens our own. (Prov. 11:25) In your preaching and teaching, highlight the proof that God exists, that he cares about us, and that the Bible is his inspired Word. Help your brothers and sisters bolster their faith as well. If any show signs of doubt, perhaps by starting to grumble against appointed brothers, do not quickly shun them. Instead, tactfully come to their aid, helping them take steps to restore their faith. (Jude 22, 23) If you are in school and the theory of evolution is discussed, boldly defend your faith in creation—you might be surprised at the effect your words have on others.

²¹ With God's help through Jesus, Peter conquered his fears and doubts, becoming a pillar of faith among early Christians. In the same way, Jehovah helps all of us to stand firm in the faith. **(Read 1 Peter 5:9, 10.)** The effort we put into building our faith is well worth it, for the rewards of faith are incomparable.

20. What benefit do we receive when we help others build their faith?

21. What promise has Jehovah made to each of us about our faith?



In What Ways Does Jehovah Love Us?

“See what sort of love the Father has given us!”—1 JOHN 3:1.

SONGS: 91, 13

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

Why do some find it difficult to comprehend that Jehovah loves them?

How does Jehovah demonstrate his love for us in the way he cares for our needs and teaches us the truth?

How is God’s love seen in the counsel and discipline he provides?

THE apostle John’s statement found at 1 John 3:1 is truly worthy of our deep and appreciative reflection. With the words “see what sort of love the Father has given us,” John was urging Christians to think about the nature and magnitude of God’s love for them, to consider how God loves them. Comprehending Jehovah’s love in those terms will surely deepen our love for him and strengthen our relationship with him.

² To some, though, God’s love for people is a foreign concept. To them, God is to be feared and obeyed. Or perhaps because of certain entrenched erroneous teachings, they feel that God is unloving, even unlovable. On the other hand, there are those who believe that God’s love is unconditional and that he loves them regardless of what they do or fail to do. As you studied the Bible, you learned that love is Jehovah’s paramount attribute and that his love moved him to give his Son as a ransom in our behalf. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8) Yet, your feelings about God’s love for you might be affected by your upbringing and background.

1. What did the apostle John urge Christians to consider, and why?
2. Why do some find it difficult to comprehend that God loves them?

³ In what ways, then, does Jehovah love us? The answer to that question lies in understanding the basic relationship between Jehovah God and us. Jehovah, of course, is the Creator of all humans. **(Read Psalm 100:3-5.)** That is why the Bible calls Adam a “son of God,” and Jesus taught his followers to address God as “our Father in the heavens.” (Luke 3:38; Matt. 6:9) Being the Life-Giver, Jehovah is our Father; the relationship between him and us is that of a father to his children. Simply put, Jehovah loves us the way a devoted father loves his children.

⁴ Human fathers, of course, are imperfect. Try as they may, they do not fully reflect the way Jehovah expresses his fatherly love. In fact, some individuals have dark memories of growing up in family situations that have left them with deep emotional or psychological scars. That is painful and sad, even tragic. To be sure, Jehovah is not a father like that. (Ps. 27:10) Knowing how Jehovah loves and cares for us will surely draw us closer to him. (Jas. 4:8) In this article, we will examine four ways in which Jehovah shows his love for us. In the following article, we will consider four ways in which we can express our love for him.

JEHOVAH IS OUR LOVING PROVIDER

⁵ When the apostle Paul was in Athens, Greece, he noticed that the city was

3. What basic truth helps us to understand God’s love for us?

4. (a) How is Jehovah different from human fathers? (b) What will we consider in this article and the following one?

5. What did the apostle Paul tell the Athenians about God?

filled with idols of the gods and deities that the people believed gave them life and life’s necessities. Paul was moved to declare: “The God who made the world and all the things in it . . . gives to all people life and breath and all things. . . . By him we have life and move and exist.” (Acts 17:24, 25, 28) Yes, out of love, Jehovah provides “all things” necessary for us to sustain our life. Think of what that simple statement entails.

⁶ Consider the earth, which Jehovah, the Maker, “has given to the sons of men.” (Ps. 115:15, 16) Scientists have spent vast amounts of money on space explorations to find other earthlike planets. Although hundreds of planets have been identified, scientists are disappointed that not one of those planets has the intricate balance of conditions that makes human life possible, as the earth does. The earth appears to be unique among all of God’s creation. Just imagine, out of the unknown number of planets that exist in the Milky Way and beyond, Jehovah created the earth to be not merely a habitable place but a comfortable, beautiful, and safe home for his human creation! (Isa. 45:18) This reflects how Jehovah must love us.—**Read Job 38:4, 7; Psalm 8:3-5.**

⁷ Though Jehovah created a wonderful home for us, he knows that for us to be happy and content, we need more than material provisions. A child feels truly secure when he senses his parents’ love and attention. Jehovah created humans in his image, giving them the spiritual capacity to sense and to

6. How does the earth reflect God’s love for us? (See opening image.)

7. How does the way God made us show that he truly loves us?

respond to his love and care. (Gen. 1:27) Furthermore, Jesus said: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.” (Matt. 5:3) As a loving Father, Jehovah “richly provides us with all the things we enjoy,” both physically and spiritually. —1 Tim. 6:17; Ps. 145:16.

JEHOVAH LOVINGLY TEACHES US THE TRUTH

⁸ Fathers love their children and want to protect them from being misled or deceived. Many parents, however, are unable to offer their children proper guidance because they themselves have rejected the standards found in God’s Word. The result is often confusion and frustration. (Prov. 14:12) Jehovah, on the other hand, is “the God of truth.” (Ps. 31:5) He loves his children and delights in letting his light of truth shine forth to guide them in every aspect of their life, particularly in matters of worship. **(Read Psalm 43:3.)** What truth has Jehovah revealed, and how does this show that he loves us?

⁹ First of all, Jehovah reveals the truth about himself. He reveals his personal name, which appears more times in the Bible than any other name. In this way, Jehovah draws close to us, letting us know him. (Jas. 4:8) Jehovah also reveals his qualities, the kind of God he is. While the observable universe makes manifest his power and wisdom, Jehovah also reveals through the Scriptures his justice and especially his boundless love. (Rom. 1:20) He is like a father who

is not only strong and wise but also fair and loving, making it easy for his children to have a close personal relationship with him.

¹⁰ For our benefit, Jehovah also reveals the truth about us, that is, about our place in his overall arrangement of things. This contributes to peace and order in his universal family. From the Bible we learn that humans are not created with the right of self-determination, to be independent of God, and that ignoring this fundamental truth will have sad consequences. (Jer. 10:23) This is critically important to our welfare. Only by recognizing God’s authority can we enjoy peace and harmony. How loving of Jehovah that he chooses to reveal this important truth!

¹¹ A loving father is deeply concerned about the future of his children, wanting them to have a real and meaningful purpose in life. Regrettably, most people are in the dark about the future, or they spend their life pursuing goals that bring no lasting benefits. (Ps. 90:10) As God’s children, we feel truly loved because Jehovah has promised us a wonderful future. That gives genuine meaning and purpose to our life.

JEHOVAH COUNSELS AND DISCIPLINES HIS CHILDREN

¹² “Why are you so angry and dejected? If you turn to doing good, will you not be restored to favor? . . . Will you get the mastery over [sin]?” (Gen. 4:6, 7) That was timely counsel coupled with

8. Why can we look to “the God of truth” for love?

9, 10. How does Jehovah show that he loves us by revealing the truth (a) about himself? (b) about us?

11. What promise by Jehovah shows his love and concern for us?

12. How did Jehovah’s counsel and direction for Cain and Baruch show his love and concern for them?

positive direction. Jehovah thus warned Cain when it was apparent that Cain was on a very dangerous course. Sadly, Cain did not heed that warning, and he suffered for it. (Gen. 4:11-13) When Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch, felt weary and despondent, Jehovah gave him counsel to help him see the reality of his problem. Unlike Cain, Baruch accepted Jehovah's counsel, and this preserved his life.—Jer. 45:2-5.

¹³ “Those whom Jehovah loves he disciplines, in fact, he scourges everyone whom he receives as a son,” wrote Paul. (Heb. 12:6) Discipline, however, is not limited to punishment. It takes various forms. There are many examples in the Bible of faithful servants undergoing ex-

treme trials that may have involved discipline and that trained them. Think of Joseph, Moses, and David. Accounts of their lives are among the most detailed and vivid of all Bible characters. Reading about how Jehovah was with them throughout their trials and how they came to be used mightily by Jehovah makes us feel all the more Jehovah's care and love for his servants.—**Read Proverbs 3:11, 12.**

¹⁴ Discipline from Jehovah helps us see another aspect of his love. When those who have done wrong are disciplined by Jehovah and they respond and repent, “he will forgive in a large way.” (Isa. 55:7) What does that mean? David gave a touching description of

13. Why did Jehovah allow trials to come upon his faithful ones?

14. How can we sense Jehovah's love when we are disciplined by him?

Christian fathers imitate Jehovah by teaching their children the truth and helping them have a relationship with their heavenly Father
(See paragraphs 8-10)



Jehovah's forgiveness in these words: "He forgives all your errors and heals all your ailments; he reclaims your life from the pit and crowns you with his loyal love and mercy. As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us he has put our transgressions." (Ps. 103:3, 4, 12) May we always be sensitive to Jehovah's counsel, even his discipline, and be quick to respond, recognizing that it is an expression of his boundless love for us.—Ps. 30:5.

JEHOVAH PROTECTS AND SAFEGUARDS US

¹⁵ Certainly, one of a loving father's priorities is that of protecting and safeguarding his family against any possible harm or serious danger. Jehovah, our heavenly Father, does no less. Of Jehovah, the psalmist says: "He is guarding the lives of his loyal ones; he rescues them from the hand of the wicked." (Ps. 97:10) Consider an example. How precious your eyes are to you! That is how Jehovah feels about his people. (**Read Zechariah 2:8.**) How precious God's people are to him!

¹⁶ One way Jehovah protects his people is by means of his angels. (Ps. 91:11) One angel saved Jerusalem from the invading Assyrians, destroying an army of 185,000 in one night. (2 Ki. 19:35) The apostles Peter and Paul as well as others experienced angelic deliverance from prison. (Acts 5:18-20; 12:6-11) In our day as well, Jehovah's hand is not short. A headquarters representative who vis-

15. What shows that Jehovah's people are precious to him?

16, 17. Describe ways that Jehovah has protected and safeguarded his people, even in our time.

ited a branch in Africa reported that political and religious conflicts had devastated that country. Fighting, looting, raping, and killing plunged the land into chaos and anarchy. Yet, none of our brothers and sisters lost their life in that case, even though many of them lost all their belongings and their livelihood. When asked how they were faring, everyone, with a broad smile, answered: "All is well, thanks to Jehovah!" They felt God's love for them.

¹⁷ Jehovah has on occasion allowed enemies to take the life of a faithful one, such as Stephen. Yet, God protects his people overall by providing timely warnings against Satan's crafty acts. (Eph. 6: 10-12) Through his Word and Bible-based publications from his organization, we are helped to see the truth about deceptive riches, immoral and violent entertainment, misuse of the Internet, and so on. Clearly, as a loving Father, Jehovah looks after the safety and well-being of his people.

A GRAND PRIVILEGE

¹⁸ Having considered just a few of the excelling ways that Jehovah shows his love for us, we cannot help but feel as Moses did. Reflecting on his long life of service to Jehovah, Moses said: "Satisfy us with your loyal love in the morning, so that we may shout joyfully and rejoice during all our days." (Ps. 90:14) To comprehend and experience Jehovah's love for us is one of the grandest privileges and blessings that we can have today. As was the apostle John, we are moved to declare: "See what sort of love the Father has given us!"—1 John 3:1.

18. How do you feel about Jehovah's love for you?



How Can We Show That We Love Jehovah?

“We love, because he first loved us.”—1 JOHN 4:19.

IT IS generally accepted that the best way a father can teach his children is by personal example. The apostle John wrote that “we love, because [God] first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) Therefore, it is clear that Jehovah has provided a surpassing example of fatherly love that can help us to love him.

² In what way has God “first loved us”? The apostle Paul said: “God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8) By making that great sacrifice—offering his own Son as the ransom for believing humans—Jehovah has demonstrated the true nature of love. It is expressed by giving, by acting in a selfless or self-sacrificing way. God’s magnanimous act made it possible for us to come to him to benefit from his love and in return show our love for him.—1 John 4:10.

³ Love is Jehovah’s dominant attribute, so we can understand why Jesus told one inquirer that the first commandment from God is: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your

1, 2. According to the apostle John, how has God shown us the way to love him?

3, 4. How should love for God be expressed?

SONGS: 56, 138

**HOW IS YOUR LOVE
INCREASED AS YOU SEE
JEHOVAH’S LOVE IN . . .**

his care for our physical
needs?

the spiritual provisions we
receive?

counsel and discipline from
him?

whole mind and with your whole strength.” (Mark 12:30) From Jesus’ words, we learn that love for God involves, first of all, our heart. Being halfhearted is displeasing to Jehovah. However, we note that love for God also involves our whole soul, mind, and strength. This means that genuine love for God is much more than just an emotional feeling of the heart. In addition to being heartfelt, our love for God must involve all our spiritual and physical faculties. According to the prophet Micah, that is what Jehovah wants from us.—**Read Micah 6:8.**

⁴ How can we show that we truly love our heavenly Father? We should love him unreservedly. As Jesus indicated, all our physical, emotional, and spiritual faculties need to be involved. In the preceding article, we considered four ways in which Jehovah has demonstrated his great love for his children. Let us now consider how we can demonstrate and deepen our love for Jehovah in ways that are acceptable and agreeable to him.

GRATITUDE FOR JEHOVAH’S PROVISIONS

⁵ When you receive a gift, what do you do? Most likely you show your appreciation in some way. In addition, you will likely make good use of the gift, not taking it for granted. “Every good gift and every perfect present is from above,” wrote the disciple James, “coming down from the Father of the celestial lights, who does not vary or change like the shifting shadows.” (Jas. 1:17) Jehovah unfailingly provides what we need to live

5. What would be a loving response to all that Jehovah has done for us?

and to be happy. Does that not move us to want to love him in return?

⁶ The Israelites lived under Jehovah’s loving care for hundreds of years and were bountifully blessed by him, in both material and spiritual ways. (Deut. 4: 7, 8) Their continuing to receive such blessings, however, was contingent on their obeying God’s Law, which included regularly offering to Jehovah “the best of the first ripe fruits” of the land. (Ex. 23:19) The Israelites would thus demonstrate that they did not take for granted Jehovah’s love and blessings.—**Read Deuteronomy 8:7-11.**

⁷ What about us? Though we are not required to offer literal sacrifices today, it is only proper that we show our love for God by honoring him with our “valuable things.” (Prov. 3:9) What are some ways that we can do so? Obviously, we can use our material things to support the Kingdom work locally and worldwide. This is certainly a fine way to express love for Jehovah, whether we have much or little materially. (2 Cor. 8:12) There are, however, other ways to show Jehovah that we love him.

⁸ Recall Jesus’ reminder to his followers not to be anxious about food and clothing but to keep on seeking first the Kingdom. He said that the Father knows what we really need. (Matt. 6:31-33) The degree to which we trust that promise is an indication of the depth of our love for Jehovah because love and trust go hand in hand. We cannot truly love someone

6. What did the Israelites have to do to continue receiving Jehovah’s blessings?

7. How can we use our “valuable things” in showing our love for Jehovah?

8, 9. How is trusting Jehovah’s promise related to our love for him? Illustrate.

whom we do not trust. (Ps. 143:8) So we might ask ourselves: ‘Do the goals I pursue and my way of life reflect that I truly love Jehovah? Do my actions day in and day out show that I trust his ability to care for my needs?’

⁹ A Christian named Mike showed such love and trust. When he was young, Mike started to develop a strong desire to serve God in a foreign land. He got married and had two children, but that desire never diminished. Encouraged by the many articles and reports about serving where the need is greater, Mike and his family decided to simplify their life. They sold their house and moved into an apartment. Then Mike reduced the size of his janitorial business and learned how he could manage the business from overseas via the Internet. The family made the move, and after serving for two happy years overseas, Mike said: “We experienced the truthfulness of Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 6:33.”

TAKE TO HEART THE TRUTH FROM GOD

¹⁰ Some 3,000 years ago, King David was moved by what he saw in the visible heavens. He wrote: “The heavens are declaring the glory of God; the skies above proclaim the work of his hands.” Then, touched by the wisdom of God’s Law, he said: “The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring strength. The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise.” What was the result of such appreciative contemplation? David continued: “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleas-

10. As reflected in King David’s case, what can meditating on the truth about Jehovah do for us?

ing to you, O Jehovah, my Rock and my Redeemer.” Clearly, a warm and intimate relationship flourished between David and his God.—Ps. 19:1, 7, 14.

¹¹ Today, we are blessed with much knowledge of Jehovah’s works of creation and the outworking of his purpose. The world promotes higher education and advanced learning. Yet, the experience of many shows that pursuing such things often leads to loss of faith and loss of love for God. The Bible, however, urges us not only to love knowledge but also to acquire wisdom and understanding. That means to learn how to use the knowledge that God has given us so that we can benefit ourselves and others. (Prov. 4:5-7) God’s “will is that all sorts of people should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth.” (1 Tim. 2:4) We demonstrate our love for Jehovah when we put our heart into telling everyone the Kingdom good news and helping people to understand God’s grand purpose for mankind.—**Read Psalm 66:16, 17.**

¹² Even young ones can demonstrate their love for Jehovah by showing appreciation for his spiritual provisions. Shannon relates that when she was 11 years old, she and her 10-year-old sister attended the “Godly Devotion” District Convention with their parents. During one session, the young ones were asked to sit in a special section. She was a bit nervous but did so. Then she was overwhelmed when each youth was

11. What should love for God move us to do with the abundant knowledge of Scriptural truth that he provides today? (See opening image.)

12. One young person showed what appreciation for spiritual provisions from Jehovah?



Follow God's counsel instead of the standards of the world
(See paragraph 15)

given as a gift a beautiful book entitled *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*. How did it affect Shannon's feelings about Jehovah God? She relates: "It was then that I finally realized that Jehovah is *real* and that he loves *me* personally very, very much." Shannon adds: "How happy we are that our great God, Jehovah, freely gives us such beautiful, perfect presents!"

ACCEPT GOD'S COUNSEL AND DISCIPLINE

¹³ "Those whom Jehovah loves he re-proves, just as a father does a son in whom he delights," the Bible reminds us. (Prov. 3:12) How, though, should we respond? The apostle Paul was being realistic when he wrote: "No discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but it is painful." In saying so, Paul was not minimizing the importance or value of discipline, for he continued: "Yet after-

ward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Heb. 12:11) If we love Jehovah, we must guard against becoming complacent or resentful of his counsel. For some, that can be a real challenge. Our love for God can greatly help us.

¹⁴ In the days of Malachi, many Jews did not appreciate God's counsel. They knew the Law regarding the offering of sacrifices but became so shamefully negligent that Jehovah had to give them strong counsel. (**Read Malachi 1:12, 13.**) How serious was the situation? Listen to Jehovah's words: "I will send on you the curse, and I will turn your blessings into curses. Yes, I have turned the blessings into curses, because you are not taking [my commandment] to heart." (Mal. 2:1, 2) Clearly, habitually or deliberately ignoring Jehovah's loving counsel can have serious consequences.

¹⁵ In today's me-first, self-centered

13, 14. What does our view of counsel from Jehovah show about our love for him?

15. In the world today, what is one common attitude that we must guard against?

generation, it is not easy to talk about counsel and discipline, let alone to accept such. Even those who seem to accept counsel or discipline often do so begrudgingly. Christians, though, are advised to “stop being molded by this system of things.” We are to perceive and follow the “perfect will of God.” (Rom. 12:2) Through his organization, Jehovah gives us timely counsel about many areas of life—our conduct with the opposite sex, our associations, and our recreation. By willingly accepting and applying such direction, we show that we are grateful and that we truly love Jehovah from the heart.—John 14:31; Rom. 6:17.

LOOK TO JEHOVAH FOR PROTECTION AND SALVATION

¹⁶ When little children sense danger, they instinctively run to their parents. As children grow older, they learn to rely more and more on their own judgment and make their own decisions. That is part of becoming an adult. However, those who enjoy a close bond with their parents are open to seeking the parents’ opinion and advice before making a decision. Spiritually, it is similar. Jehovah has given us his spirit, stimulating in us “the desire and the power to act.” Yet, it would reflect a serious lack of love and trust for us to make decisions without taking his will into consideration.—Phil. 2:13.

¹⁷ Once in the days of Samuel, Israel was badly defeated in battle by the Philistines. God’s people were in dire need

of help and protection. What did they do? “Let us take the ark of Jehovah’s covenant with us from Shiloh, so that it may be with us and save us from the hand of our enemies,” they decided. The outcome? “The slaughter was very great; on Israel’s side, 30,000 foot soldiers fell. Moreover, the Ark of God was captured.” (1 Sam. 4:2-4, 10, 11) It might have seemed that in taking the Ark with them, the Israelites were looking to Jehovah for help. Really, though, they had not sought Jehovah’s direction; they were following their own ideas, and the result was disastrous.—**Read Proverbs 14:12.**

¹⁸ The psalmist showed the right heart attitude when he wrote: “Wait for God, for I will yet praise him as my Grand Savior. My God, I am in despair. That is why I remember you.” (Ps. 42:5, 6) What deep feeling and love for Jehovah! Have you developed such love for and reliance on our heavenly Father? Even if you are inclined to answer yes, you may be able to increase your reliance on him in line with what the Bible tells us: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he will make your paths straight.”—Prov. 3:5, 6.

¹⁹ By loving us first, Jehovah has shown us how to love him. Let us always keep in mind his surpassing example. And let us increasingly demonstrate our love for him ‘with our whole heart and with our whole soul and with our whole mind and with our whole strength.’—Mark 12:30.

16, 17. (a) Why should we consider Jehovah’s will when we make decisions? (b) How did the Israelites show lack of love for and trust in Jehovah?

18. How should we feel about turning to Jehovah for help?

19. In what ways do you want to endeavor to show love for Jehovah?

Jehovah's Blessing Has Enriched My Life

AS TOLD BY MELITA JARACZ

I WAS born in 1927 in the little town of Wakaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. Dad and Mom had seven children, four boys and three girls, so I came to know early in life what it was like to be with people.

Our family felt the effects of the desperate economic times of the 1930's known as the Great Depression. We were not wealthy, but we did not lack food. We had some hens and a cow, so we were never short of eggs, milk, cream, cheese, and butter. As you can imagine, all in our farm family had chores.

I have many happy memories of that time, such as the sweet fragrance of apples filling the room. You see, when Dad went to town in the autumn to sell farm produce, he often returned with a box of freshly picked apples. What a treat it was for each of us to have a juicy apple every day!

OUR FAMILY LEARNS THE TRUTH

I was six years old when my parents heard of the truth. Their first son, Johnny, had died shortly after he was born. My distraught parents asked the local priest, "Where's Johnny?" The priest said that the baby had not been christened, so he was not in heaven. Rather, he was in Limbo. The priest also said that if my parents paid him, he would pray for Johnny to get out of Limbo and go to heaven. How would you have felt? Dad and Mom were so disillusioned that they did not speak with that priest again. Yet, they still wondered what had become of Johnny.



One day Mom came across a booklet entitled *Where Are the Dead?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses. She read it eagerly. When Dad came home, she said excitedly: "I know where Johnny is! He's sleeping now, but one day he's going to awaken." That evening my father read the entire booklet. Mom and Dad were comforted to learn that the Bible says that the dead are asleep and that there will be a future resurrection.—Eccl. 9: 5, 10; Acts 24:15.

What they found changed our lives for the better, bringing both comfort and happiness. They started studying the Bible with the Witnesses and attending meetings with the little congregation in Wakaw, where most had a Ukrainian background. Soon Mom and Dad were sharing in the preaching work.

Not long after that, we moved to British Columbia and a congregation warmly welcomed us. I think back with pleasure on our family preparation of *The Watchtower* for the Sunday meetings. All of us were developing a deep love for Jehovah and for Bible truth. I could see how our lives were being enriched and how Jehovah was blessing us.

Understandably, it was not the easiest thing for us children to speak to people about our beliefs. Something that really helped, though, was that my younger sister Eva and I often prepared the month's field service presentation and demonstrated it at the Service Meeting. It was a wonderful way for us, though we were shy, to learn to speak with others about the Bible. I'm so grateful for how we were trained to preach!

One of the highlights of our childhood was having full-time servants stay with us. For example, we loved it when our circuit overseer, Jack Nathan, visited our congregation and stayed in our home.* His countless stories were a delight, and his sincere commendation made us want to serve Jehovah faithfully.

I recall thinking, "When I grow up, I want to be like Brother Nathan." Little did I realize then that his example was helping to groom me for a career in full-time service. By the time I was 15 years old, I was determined to serve Jehovah. In 1942, Eva and I were baptized.

TESTS OF FAITH

During World War II when patriotism ran high, Miss Scott, a particularly intolerant schoolteacher, expelled my two sisters and one of my brothers from school. Why? Because they declined to salute the flag. Then she contacted my schoolteacher and urged her to expel me. But my teacher said, "We live in a free country, and we have the right to refrain from patriotic ceremonies." Despite much pressure from Miss Scott, my teacher said firmly, "This is my decision."

Miss Scott replied: "No, it is not your decision. I will report you if you don't expel Melita." My teacher explained to my parents that if she wanted to keep her job, she had no choice but to expel me, even though she believed that it was the

* Jack Nathan's life story was published in *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1990, pp. 10-14.

wrong thing to do. Nevertheless, we obtained school material that we could study at home. Shortly thereafter, we moved some 20 miles (32 km) away, where we were accepted at another school.

The war years brought bans on our literature; yet, we went from house to house with the Bible. As a result, we became skilled at sharing the good news of the Kingdom directly from the Scriptures. That, in turn, helped us to grow spiritually and experience Jehovah's support.

ENTERING FULL-TIME SERVICE

As soon as Eva and I completed our schooling, we entered the pioneer service. For secular employment, I first worked in a department store deli. In time, I took a six-month course in hairdressing, something I had enjoyed doing at home. I found work at a hair salon two days a week and also taught the trade twice a month. In that way I supported myself in full-time service.

In 1955, I wanted to attend the "Triumphant Kingdom" assemblies in New York City, U.S.A., and Nuremberg, Germany. Before I left for New York, though, I met Brother Nathan Knorr from world headquarters. He and his wife were

I had a knack for hairdressing
and even received a few awards for it



attending a convention in Vancouver, Canada. During their visit, I was asked to do Sister Knorr's hair. Brother Knorr was pleased with the result and wanted to meet me. As we chatted, I told him that I was planning to be in New York before going on to Germany. He invited me to work at Brooklyn Bethel for nine days.

That trip changed my life. In New York, I met a young brother named Theodore (Ted) Jaracz. Shortly after meeting him, I was surprised when he asked me, "Are you a pioneer?" I replied, "No." My friend LaVonne overheard this and interjected, "Yes, she is." Puzzled, Ted asked LaVonne, "Well, who knows better, you or her?" I explained that I had been pioneering and intended to start again as soon as I returned from the conventions.

THE SPIRITUAL MAN I MARRIED

Born in 1925 in Kentucky, U.S.A., Ted had symbolized his dedication to Jehovah at the age of 15. Though none of his family members came into the truth, he became a regular pioneer two years later. That began a career of nearly 67 years in the full-time service.

In July 1946, at the age of 20, Ted graduated from the seventh class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. After that, he served as a traveling overseer in Cleveland, Ohio. Some four years later, he was assigned to serve as branch servant in Australia.

Ted was at the convention in Nuremberg, Germany, and we spent some time together. A romance blossomed. I was happy that his goals were centered on serving Jehovah whole-souled. He was a very dedicated person, serious in his devotion but kind and friendly in his disposition. I felt that he put others' interests ahead of his own. Following that convention, Ted returned to Australia and I went back to Vancouver, but we kept in touch by letter.

After some five years in Australia, Ted returned to the United States and then came to



After marrying in 1956, we enjoyed many happy years together in full-time service

pioneer in Vancouver. I was happy to see how much my family liked him. My older brother, Michael, was very protective of me, and he often expressed concern if a young brother took an interest in me. However, Michael quickly became fond of Ted. "Melita," he said, "you've got a good man here. You had better treat him well and be smart enough not to lose him."

I too had become very fond of Ted. We were married on December 10, 1956. We pioneered together in Vancouver, then in California, and then we were assigned to the circuit work in Missouri and Arkansas. For some 18 years, we had a different home each week as we served in the traveling work throughout a large part of the United States. We had wonderful experiences in the ministry, as well as much happy association with brothers and sisters. That more than made up for the inconveniences of living out of a suitcase.

Something I particularly respected about Ted was that he never took his relationship with Jehovah for granted. He cherished his sacred service to the greatest Person in the universe. We loved to read and study the Bible together. At night before retiring, we knelt next to the bed, and he prayed for us. Then we separately said our own prayers. I always knew when a serious matter was weighing on Ted's mind. He would get out of bed, kneel down again, and silently pray

at length. I deeply appreciated that he wanted to pray to Jehovah about matters great and small.

Some years after we got married, Ted explained to me that he was going to start partaking of the emblems at the Memorial. “I have prayed about this intensely to be absolutely sure that I am doing what Jehovah wants me to do,” he said. I was not entirely surprised that he had been anointed with God’s spirit to serve in heaven eventually. I viewed it as a privilege to support one of Christ’s brothers.—Matt. 25:35-40.

A NEW AVENUE OF SACRED SERVICE

In 1974, to our great surprise, Ted was invited to become a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses. In time, we were called to serve at Brooklyn Bethel. While Ted cared for his responsibilities on the Governing Body, I worked as a housekeeper or in the hair salon.

As part of Ted’s responsibilities, he was assigned to visit various branches. He was particularly interested in the preaching work in countries behind the Iron Curtain. Once, during a much needed vacation in Sweden, Ted said: “Melita, the preaching work is banned in Poland, and I would love to help the brothers there.” So we

obtained visas and went to Poland. Ted met with some of the brothers who cared for our work, and they went for a long walk so that no one could overhear their conversation. The brothers had four days of very intense meetings, but I was happy to see how satisfied Ted was to help his spiritual family.

The next time we visited Poland was in November 1977. F. W. Franz, Daniel Sydlík, and Ted made the first official visit by members of the Governing Body. Our work was still banned, yet the three Governing Body members were able to speak to overseers, pioneers, and longtime Witnesses in various cities.

The next year, when Milton Henschel and Ted visited Poland, they met with officials who were becoming more tolerant of us and our activities. In 1982 the Polish government permitted our brothers to hold one-day assemblies. The following year, larger conventions were held, mostly in rented halls. While the ban was still on in 1985, we were allowed to hold four conventions in large stadiums. Then, in May 1989, while plans were under way for even larger conventions, the Polish government granted Jehovah’s Witnesses legal recognition. Few events brought Ted more joy than that.

Ted and others at the Ministry of Justice in Moscow after our work received official registration

District convention in Poland





I found great pleasure in working and giving training in the Bethel beauty shop

Three years later, he had a second stroke and died peacefully on Wednesday, June 9, 2010. Although I had always realized that Ted would have to finish his earthly course, I cannot describe how painful it was for me to lose him and how much I miss him. Still, I daily thank Jehovah for what I was able to do to assist Ted. We enjoyed over 53 years of full-time service together. I thank Jehovah for how Ted helped me draw closer to my heavenly Father. Now, I have no doubt that his new assignment brings him great delight and satisfaction.

MEETING NEW CHALLENGES IN LIFE

After so many busy, happy years with my husband, adjusting to the present challenges has not been easy. Ted and I loved meeting visitors at Bethel and at our Kingdom Hall. Now that my beloved Ted is no longer here and I am not as strong as I used to be, my association is more limited. Nevertheless, I still enjoy being with my dear brothers and sisters at Bethel and in the congregation. The Bethel routine is not easy, but it is a source of joy to be able to serve God in this way. And my love for the preaching work has in no way diminished. Though I get tired and cannot be on my feet for any length of time, I get much satisfaction from sharing in street witnessing and conducting Bible studies.

When I see all the terrible things happening in the world, how glad I am to have been in Jehovah's service with such a wonderful marriage mate! Jehovah's blessing has truly enriched my life.—Prov. 10:22.

COPING WITH HEALTH SETBACKS

In 2007 we were on our way to attend a branch dedication in South Africa. In England, Ted had trouble with his blood pressure, and a doctor advised him to postpone his trip. After Ted recovered, we returned to the United States. But a few weeks later, he had a severe stroke that disabled his right side.

Ted's recovery was slow, and initially he was not able to go to the office. We were grateful, though, that his speech was normal. Despite his limitations, he tried to keep up his routine, even participating in the weekly Governing Body meetings by telephone from our living room.

Ted deeply appreciated the excellent physical therapy he received in the Bethel infirmary. Slowly, he regained much of his mobility. He was able to care for some of his theocratic assignments, and he always managed to be cheerful.



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