

FEBRUARY 1, 2003

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Can You Be
Happy and
Secure in
YOUR WORK?**



THE WATCHTOWER®

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Job Security and Satisfaction UNDER SIEGE

"THE right to work" is fundamental to all humans, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, issued by the United Nations. That prerogative, however, is not always guaranteed. Job security is subject to many things—from the health of local economies to the state of the global market. Nevertheless, when employment is lost or threatened, demonstrations, riots, and strikes often follow. Few countries are immune. Even the word "work," said one writer, "is, as it has always been, an emotionally charged word."

Work is important to us for many reasons. Besides providing us with income, it contributes to our mental and emotional well-being. Work satisfies the human desire to be a productive member of society and to have a purpose in life. It also engenders within us a measure of self-respect. Hence, even some who have more than enough money to care for their needs or who are eligible for retirement prefer to continue working. Yes, work is so important that the lack of it usually invites serious social problems.

On the other hand, there are those who have a job but face so many pressures at work that they lose their job satisfaction. For instance, because of today's highly competitive market, an increasing

number of companies have trimmed their staff in order to cut expenses. This may place additional demands on the remaining employees, who may thus have to carry an extra load.

Modern technology, which is supposed to make life easier and work more efficient, may have added to the pressures in the workplace. For example, computers, fax machines, and the Internet allow people the option of taking their work home at day's end, thus blurring the line between home and office. One worker felt that his company pager and cell phone were like an invisible leash, with his boss at the other end.

A growing fear that many older people have in our rapidly changing economic and work environment is that of being viewed as obsolete before their time. In

Modern technology may have added to the pressures in the workplace

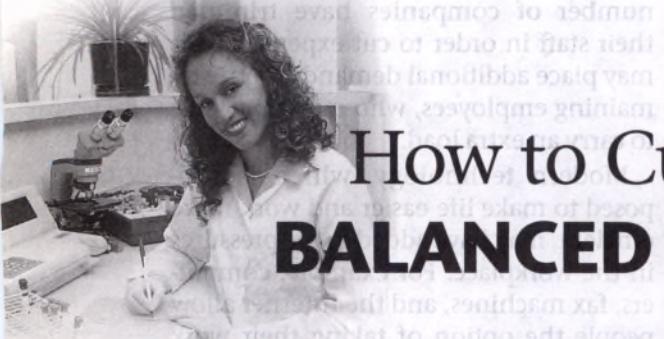


this regard, former Human Rights Commissioner Chris Sidoti stated: "There seem to be stereotypes that unless you are under 40, you're not going to cope with computers and new technology." Hence, many good workers who would previously have been viewed as being in the prime of life are nowadays deemed too old to be useful. What a tragedy!

Understandably, the work ethic and loyalty to the company have taken a battering in recent years. "When corporations throw peo-

ple overboard at the slightest blip of the stock market, corporate loyalty becomes a thing of the past," says the French magazine *Libération*. "You have to work, of course, but for yourself, not for the company."

In spite of these mounting problems, the basic human need to work continues. So in our rapidly changing times, how can one cultivate a balanced view of secular work and, at the same time, maintain a sense of security and job satisfaction?



How to Cultivate a **BALANCED VIEW OF WORK**

IN TODAY'S high-pressure world of global markets, cutthroat competition, and mass production, many people do not look forward to going to work each day. Yet, we should enjoy our work. Why? Because we were created in God's image—and God takes pleasure in his work. For example, when reviewing what he had done at the end of the six creative "days," or long periods of time, "God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good," states Genesis 1:31.

Jehovah's love of work is undoubtedly one reason he is called "the happy God." (1 Timothy 1:11) Is it not reasonable, then, that the more we imitate him, the happier we become? In this regard, King Solomon of ancient Israel, an outstanding builder and organizer, wrote: "Every man should eat and indeed drink and see good for all his hard work. It is the gift of God."—Ecclesiastes 3:13.

To cultivate a balanced, wholesome view of work in today's rapidly changing work-

place can be a challenge. But Jehovah God blesses those who heed his loving direction. (Psalm 119:99, 100) Such ones become valued and trusted employees and therefore are less likely to lose their job. They also learn to see their life and work not just from a material perspective but from a spiritual one. This enables them to make responsible decisions in life and to see that their happiness and sense of security are not bound up with their job or in the often fickle job market. (Matthew 6:31-33; 1 Corinthians 2:14, 15) It helps them to cultivate a truly balanced work ethic.

Cultivate a Godly Work Ethic

Some people are workaholics, putting their job before all else. Others live for day's end when they can quit work and go home. What is the balanced view? The Bible answers: "Better is a handful of rest than a double handful of hard work and striving after the wind." (Ecclesiastes 4:6) Working too

BALANCING WORK WITH SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES AND RECREATION



providing honorably for himself and his dependents. Through hard work he may even be able to help those who are truly in need—a practice God's Word encourages.—Proverbs 21:25, 26; Ephesians 4:28.

Trained From Childhood to Esteem Work

Good work habits do not come about by accident; they are learned early in life. Hence, the Bible exhorts parents: "Train up a boy [or girl] according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Besides setting a good example as workers themselves, wise parents begin training their little ones by giving them tasks around the home appropriate to their age. Even though children may chafe at some chores, they will come to see themselves as valued members of the family—especially when Mom and Dad commend them for a job well done. Sadly, some parents do virtually everything for their offspring, perhaps out of mistaken kindness. Such parents do well to reflect on Proverbs 29:21, which says: "If one is pampering one's servant [or offspring] from youth on, in his later life he will even become a thankless one."

Conscientious parents also take a keen interest in their children's schooling, encouraging them to learn and to work hard while

hard or too long is, in fact, counterproductive—a vain "striving after the wind." Why so? Because we may well do injury to the very things that are responsible for our greatest happiness: our relationship with family and friends, our spirituality, our health, and even our longevity. (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) The balanced view is to be content with less material gain along with a reasonable measure of peace rather than be loaded down with a double dose of work along with strife and misery.

In encouraging such a balanced view, the Bible does not endorse laziness. (Proverbs 20:4) Laziness corrodes self-respect and the respect others may have for us. Worse still, it damages our relationship with God. The Bible frankly states that the person who refuses to work does not deserve to eat at the expense of others. (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Rather, he should change his ways and work hard, thus

at school. This can stand young ones in good stead later when they enter the work force.

Be Wise in Your Choice of Work

While not telling us what kind of work to pursue, the Bible gives us fine guidelines so that our spiritual advancement, service to God, and other important responsibilities are not compromised. For example, the apostle Paul wrote: "The time left is reduced. Henceforth let those . . . making use of the world [be] as those not using it to the full; for the scene of this world is changing." (1 Corinthians 7:29-31) There is nothing permanent or completely stable in the present system of things. Giving all our time and energy to it is like investing our entire life's savings in a house that is built in a flood zone. What an imprudent investment!

Other Bible translations render the phrase "not using it to the full" as "not become engrossed in it" and "not fully occupied with them." (*The Jerusalem Bible; Today's English Version*) Wise people never lose sight of the

fact that the time "is reduced" for the present system and that to be "engrossed," or "fully occupied," in it will inevitably lead to disappointment and regret.—1 John 2:15-17.

'God Will by No Means Forsake You'

Jehovah knows our needs even better than we do. He also knows where we are in the outworking of his purpose. Hence, he reminds us: "Let your manner of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things. For [God] has said: 'I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you!'" (Hebrews 13:5) How comforting those words are! Imitating God's loving concern for his people, Jesus devoted a substantial portion of his famous Sermon on the Mount to teaching his disciples the right view of work and of material things.—Matthew 6:19-33.

Jehovah's Witnesses strive to heed those teachings. For example, when an employer invited a Witness, an electrician, to work overtime regularly, the employee in this instance declined. Why? Because he did not want his secular work to intrude on the time he devoted to his family and to spiritual matters. Since he was an excellent and trusted worker, his employer respected his wishes. Of course, things do not always turn out that way, and one may have to look for other employment in order to maintain a balanced life-style. Nevertheless, those who place their full trust in Jehovah usually find that their good conduct and work ethic earn them the favor of their employer.—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

When All Work Will Be Rewarding

In the present, imperfect system of things, employment and employment prospects will never be free of problems and uncertainties. In fact, things may get worse as the world becomes more unstable and economies seesaw or even falter. But this situation is temporary.

"IN CONSTANT DEMAND"

"Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men," says the Bible. (Colossians 3:23) Obviously, one whose work ethic is governed by this fine principle would be a sought-after employee. For that reason, J. J. Luna, in his book *How to Be Invisible*, advises potential employers to search out active members of certain religious groups, but he adds: "In actual practice we usually end up with [Jehovah's] Witnesses." Among the reasons he gives is that they are well-known for their honesty, and that puts them "in constant demand" in various fields.

Soon, no one will be out of work. What is more, all work will be truly absorbing and rewarding. How is that possible? What will bring about such a change?

Through his prophet Isaiah, Jehovah pointed forward to such a time. "I am creating new heavens and a new earth," said Jehovah, "and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart." (Isaiah 65:17) He was speaking of a new government of his making, under which a totally new and different human society will become a reality.—Daniel 2:44.

Regarding the way people will live and work then, the prophecy continues: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. For like the days of a tree will the days of my people be; and the work of their own

hands my chosen ones will use to the full. They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance; because they are the offspring made up of the blessed ones of Jehovah, and their descendants with them."—Isaiah 65:21-23.

What a difference that new world of God's design will make! Do you not want to live in such a world, one in which you "will not toil for nothing" but will enjoy to the full the "fruitage" of your labor? Note, though, who will enjoy such blessings: "They are the offspring made up of the blessed ones of Jehovah." You can be one of such "blessed ones" by learning about Jehovah and meeting his requirements. Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Jehovah's Witnesses would be glad to help you gain that life-giving knowledge by a systematic study of God's Word, the Bible.



"REMAIN IN MY WORD"

"If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples."—JOHN 8:31.

WHEN Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity, returned to heaven, he did not leave behind on this earth books written by him, monuments built by him, or riches amassed by him. He did leave behind disciples as well as specific requirements for discipleship. In fact, in the Gospel of John, we find that Jesus mentioned three important requirements that anyone who wants to be his follower must meet. What are these requirements? What can we do to meet them? And how can we make sure that we personally qualify as disciples of Christ today?*

² About six months before his death, Jesus went up to Jerusalem and preached to the crowds who had gathered there to celebrate the week-long Festival of Booths. As a result, halfway through the festival, "many of the crowd put faith in him." Jesus kept on preaching, so that on the last day of the festival, once more "many put faith in him." (John 7:10, 14, 31, 37; 8:30) At that point, Jesus directed his attention to the new believers and stated an important requirement for discipleship, as recorded by the apostle John: "If you *remain* in my word, you are really my disciples."—John 8:31.

³ With those words, Jesus was not suggesting that the new believers were lacking

* In this article, we will consider the first of these requirements. The other two will be discussed in the following articles.

1. (a) When Jesus returned to heaven, what did he leave behind on earth? (b) What questions will we consider?
2. What is an important requirement for discipleship, as recorded in the Gospel of John?
3. What quality is needed for one to "remain in [Jesus'] word"?

in faith. Rather, he was pointing out that they had before them the opportunity to become his true disciples—provided that they remained in his word, that they showed endurance. They had accepted his word, but now they needed to continue in it. (John 4:34; Hebrews 3:14) Indeed, Jesus viewed endurance as such an important quality for his followers that in his very last conversation with his apostles, recorded in the Gospel of John, Jesus twice urged: "Continue following me." (John 21:19, 22) Many early Christians did just that. (2 John 4) What helped them to endure?

⁴ The apostle John, a faithful disciple of Christ for some seven decades, pointed to an important factor. He commended faithful Christians, saying: "You are strong and the word of God remains in you and you have conquered the wicked one." Those disciples of Christ endured, or remained in the word of God, because the word of God remained in them. They had heartfelt appreciation for it. (1 John 2:14, 24) Likewise today, in order to 'endure to the end,' we need to make sure that the word of God remains in us. (Matthew 24:13) How can we do that? An illustration told by Jesus provides the answer.

"Hearing the Word"

⁵ Jesus gave an illustration of a sower who sows seed, and it is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 14-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15)

4. What enabled the early Christians to endure?
5. (a) What different types of soil are mentioned by Jesus in one of his illustrations? (b) What do the seed and the soil in Jesus' illustration represent?

As you read the accounts, you will note that the key feature of the illustration is that the same kind of seed falls on various types of soil, producing different results. The first type of soil is hard, the second is shallow, and the third is overgrown with thorns. The fourth type, unlike the other three, is "fine" and "good soil." According to Jesus' own explanation, the seed is the Kingdom message found in God's Word, and the soil represents people with differing conditions of the heart. Although the people pictured by the various types of soil have some things in common, those pictured by the fine soil have a characteristic that sets them apart from the rest.

⁶ The account at Luke 8:12-15 shows that in all four instances, people 'hear the word.' However, those having "a fine and good heart" go beyond "hearing the word." They "retain it and bear fruit with endurance." The fine and good soil, being soft and deep, allows the roots of the seed to sink down, and as a result, the seed sprouts and produces fruit. (Luke 8:8) Similarly, those with a fine heart understand, appreciate, and absorb the word of God. (Romans 10:10;

2 Timothy 2:7) The word of God remains in them. Consequently, they bear fruit with endurance. A deep, heartfelt appreciation for God's Word is thus essential for showing endurance as Christ's disciples. (1 Timothy 4:15)

6. (a) How does the fourth type of soil in Jesus' illustration differ from the other three types, and what does that mean? (b) What is essential for showing endurance as Christ's disciples?

How, though, can we develop such heartfelt appreciation for God's Word?

Heart Condition and Meaningful Reflection

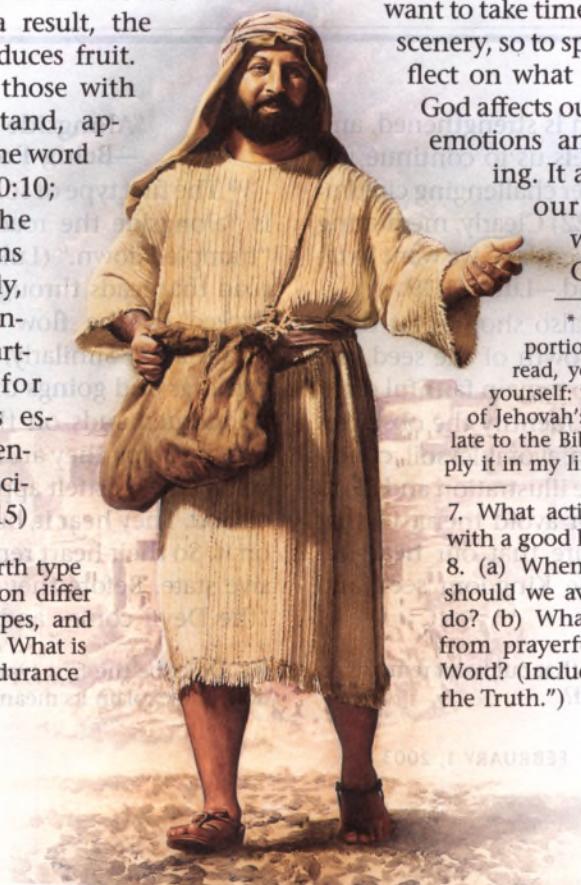
⁷ Note with what activity the Bible repeatedly associates a fine and good heart. "The heart of the righteous one *meditates* so as to answer." (Proverbs 15:28) "Let the sayings of my mouth and the *meditation* of my heart become pleasurable before you, O Jehovah." (Psalm 19:14) "The *meditation* of my heart will be of things of understanding."—Psalm 49:3.

⁸ Like these Bible writers, we too need to meditate appreciatively and prayerfully on God's Word and his activity. When reading the Bible or Bible-based publications, we should not act as if we were hurried tourists who rush from one scenic spot to the next, filming everything but seeing little. Instead, when studying the Bible, we want to take time to stop and enjoy the scenery, so to speak.* As we quietly reflect on what we read, the word of God affects our heart. It touches our emotions and shapes our thinking. It also moves us to share our intimate thoughts with God in prayer. Consequently, our

* To meditate prayerfully on a portion of the Bible that you have read, you could, for instance, ask yourself: 'Does it reveal one or more of Jehovah's qualities? How does it relate to the Bible's theme? How can I apply it in my life or use it to help others?'

7. What activity is closely associated with a good heart?

8. (a) When reading the Bible, what should we avoid but what should we do? (b) What benefits do we derive from prayerful meditation on God's Word? (Include the box "Firmly Set in the Truth.")



"FIRMLY SET IN THE TRUTH"

MANY longtime disciples of Christ prove year after year that they are "firmly set in the truth." (2 Peter 1:12) What helps them to endure? Consider some of their comments.

"I end each day with reading a portion of the Bible and saying a prayer. Then I think about what I have read."—Jean, baptized 1939.

"Meditating on how Jehovah, someone so lofty, loves us deeply gives me a sense of security and the strength to remain faithful."—Patricia, baptized 1946.

"By sticking to good Bible-study habits and by being absorbed in 'the deep things of God,' I have been able to keep going."—1 Corinthians 2:10; Anna, baptized 1939.

"I read the Bible and our Bible-based publications with a view to examining my heart and motives."—Zelda, baptized 1943.

"My best times are when I can take a walk



and talk to Jehovah in prayer and just let him know how I really feel."—Ralph, baptized 1947.

"I start the day with considering the daily text and reading a portion of the Bible. This gives me something fresh to meditate on during the day."—Marie, baptized 1935.

"For me, verse-by-verse discussions of a Bible book are a real tonic."—Daniel, baptized 1946.

When do you take time to reflect prayerfully on God's word?—Daniel 6:10b; Mark 1:35; Acts 10:9.

attachment to Jehovah is strengthened, and our love for God impels us to continue following Jesus even under challenging circumstances. (Matthew 10:22) Clearly, meditating on what God says is essential if we want to remain faithful to the end.—Luke 21:19.

⁹ Jesus' illustration also shows that there are obstacles to the growth of the seed, the word of God. Hence, to remain faithful disciples, we do well (1) to identify the obstacles represented by the unfavorable soil conditions mentioned in the illustration and (2) to take steps to correct or avoid them. In that way, we will make sure that our heart remains receptive to the Kingdom seed and keeps bearing fruit.

9. How can we make sure that our heart remains receptive to the word of God?

"Alongside the Road" —Being Preoccupied

¹⁰ The first type of soil that the seed falls on is "alongside the road," where the seed is "trampled down." (Luke 8:5) Soil alongside a road that leads through a grainfield is hard packed by the flow of pedestrian traffic. (Mark 2:23) Similarly, those who allow the comings and goings of the world to impose undue demands on their time and energy may find that they are too preoccupied to develop any heartfelt appreciation for the word of God. They hear it, but they fail to meditate on it. So their heart remains in an unresponsive state. Before they develop a love for it, "the Devil comes and takes the word away

10. Describe the first type of soil in Jesus' illustration, and explain its meaning.

from their hearts in order that they may not believe and be saved." (Luke 8:12) Can this be prevented?

¹¹ There is much that can be done to prevent the heart from becoming like unproductive soil alongside a road. Trodden down and hard soil can become soft and productive if it is plowed up and the flow of traffic over it is diverted. Similarly,

making time for studying and meditating on God's Word can result in the heart's becoming like fine, productive soil. The key is not to become too preoccupied with the mundane things of life. (Luke 12:13-15) Instead,

make sure that time is available to reflect on "the more important things" in life.—Philippians 1:9-11.



"Upon the Rock-Mass"—Being Fearful

¹² When the seed falls on the second type of soil, it does not just remain on it, as in the first case. It takes root and sprouts. But then when the sun rises, the sprout is scorched by the heat of the sun and withers. However, note this significant detail. The real reason that the sprout withers is not the heat. After all, the plant that comes up in the fine soil is also exposed to the sun, but it does not wither—in fact, it thrives. What makes the difference? This sprout withers, explains Jesus, "because of not having depth of soil" and "not having moisture." (Matthew 13:5, 6; Luke 8:6) A "rock-mass," or rock-shelf, situated right under the layer of top soil, prevents the seed from sinking its roots deep enough

11. How can we prevent our heart condition from becoming like hard soil?

12. What is the real reason that the sprout withers in the second type of soil mentioned in Jesus' illustration?

to find moisture and stability. The sprout withers because the soil is shallow.

¹³ This part of the illustration refers to individuals who "receive the word with joy" and zealously follow Jesus "for a season." (Luke 8:13) When exposed to the blazing sun of "tribulation or persecution," they become so fearful that they lose their joy and strength and give up following Christ. (Matthew 13:21) The deeper reason for their fear, however, is not opposition. After all, millions of Christ's disciples endure various forms of tribulation, yet they remain faithful. (2 Corinthians 2:4; 7:5) The real reason some become fearful and fall away is that the rocklike condition of their heart prevents them from meditating deeply enough on positive and spiritual things. Consequently, the appreciation they develop for Jehovah and his word is too superficial and too feeble to withstand opposition. How can one prevent such an outcome?

¹⁴ An individual needs to make sure that no rocklike obstacles, such as deep-seated bitterness, underlying self-interest, or similar hard but hidden feelings, are lodged in his heart. If such a barrier is already in place, the power exerted by God's word can break it up. (Jeremiah 23:29; Ephesians 4:22; Hebrews 4:12) Thereafter, prayerful meditation will stimulate an "implanting of the word" deep in the individual's heart. (James 1:21) This will provide the strength to cope with times of discouragement and the courage to remain faithful despite trials.



13. What kind of individuals are like shallow soil, and what is a deeper reason for the way they react?

14. What steps should an individual take to prevent his heart condition from becoming like shallow soil?

"Among the Thorns" —Being Divided

¹⁵ The third type of soil, the one with thorns, especially deserves our attention because in some ways it is similar to the fine soil. Like the fine soil, the thorny soil lets the seed take root and sprout. Initially, there is no difference in the growth of the new plant in these two types of soil. With time, however, a condition develops that eventually chokes the plant. Unlike the fine soil, this soil becomes overgrown with thorns. As the young plant rises from this soil, it faces competition from 'thorns that grow up with it.' For a while both crops vie for nutrition, light, and space, but eventually the thorns overshadow the plant and 'choke it off.' —Luke 8:7.

¹⁶ What kind of individuals resemble the thorny soil? Jesus explains: "These are the

15. (a) Why does the third type of soil mentioned by Jesus especially deserve our attention? (b) What eventually happens with the third type of soil, and why?

16. (a) What individuals resemble the thorny soil? (b) According to the three Gospel accounts, what is represented by the thorns?—See footnote.

What Are Your Answers?

- Why do we need to 'remain in Jesus' word'?
- How can we allow God's word to remain in our heart?
- What kinds of individuals are represented by the four different types of soil mentioned by Jesus?
- How can you find time to reflect on God's word?



ones that have heard, but, by being carried away by anxieties and riches and pleasures of this life, they are completely choked and bring nothing to perfection." (Luke 8:14) Just as the sower's seed and the thorns grow in the soil at the same time, so some individuals try to take in the word of God and the "pleasures of this life" at the same time. The truth of God's word is sown in their heart, but it faces competition from other pursuits that vie for their attention. Their figurative heart is divided. (Luke 9:57-62) This prevents them from giving sufficient time to prayerful and meaningful reflection on God's word. They fail to absorb God's word fully and thus lack the heartfelt appreciation needed to endure. Gradually, their spiritual interests are overshadowed by nonspiritual pursuits to the point that they are "completely choked."* What a sad ending for those who do not love Jehovah wholeheartedly!—Matthew 6:24; 22:37.

¹⁷ By giving spiritual matters precedence over material considerations, we avoid being choked by the pains and pleasures of this world. (Matthew 6:31-33; Luke 21:34-36) Bible reading and reflection upon what we read should never be neglected. We will find more time for concentrated and prayerful meditation if we simplify our life as much as possible. (1 Timothy 6:6-8) Servants of God who have done so—who have, as it were, uprooted the thorns from the soil to give more nutrition, light, and space to the fruit-bearing plant—are experiencing Jehovah's blessing. Says Sandra, aged 26: "When I meditate on my blessings in the truth, I realize that the

* According to the three Gospel accounts of Jesus' parable, the seed is choked by the pains and pleasures of this world: "The anxieties of this system of things," "the deceptive power of riches," "the desires for the rest of the things," and the "pleasures of this life."—Mark 4:19; Matthew 13:22; Luke 8:14; Jeremiah 4:3, 4.

17. What choices do we need to make in life so as not to be choked by the figurative thorns mentioned in Jesus' illustration?

world can offer nothing that compares with it!"—Psalm 84:11.

¹⁸ Clearly, then, all of us, young and old, will remain in the word of God and endure as Christ's disciples as long as the word of God remains in us. Therefore, let us make sure that the soil of our figurative heart never becomes hard, shallow, or overgrown but remains soft and deep. In that way, we will be able to absorb the word of God fully and "bear fruit with endurance."—Luke 8:15.

18. How can we remain in the word of God and endure as Christians?

By giving priority to spiritual matters, we can "bear fruit with endurance"

"HAVE LOVE AMONG YOURSELVES"

"By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."

—JOHN 13:35.

LITTLE children." (John 13:33) With that tender expression, Jesus addressed his apostles on the evening before his death. We have no record in the Gospel accounts that Jesus had ever before used this compassionate expression in speaking to them. On that special night, however, he was moved to use this affectionate address to convey the deep love he felt for his followers. In fact, Jesus spoke of love some 30 times that night. Why did he give such emphasis to this quality?

² Jesus explained why love is so important. "By this," he said, "all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35; 15:12, 17) Being a fol-

lower of Christ goes hand in hand with showing brotherly love. True Christians are identified, not by a peculiar form of dress or by some unusual customs, but by the warm and tender love they show to one another. Having this outstanding kind of love is the second of the three principal requirements of a disciple of Christ mentioned at the start of the preceding article. What will help us to continue to meet this requirement?

"Doing It in Fuller Measure"

³ As it was among Christ's followers in the first century, this outstanding love is observable today among Christ's genuine disciples. To first-century Christians, the apostle Paul wrote: "With reference to brotherly love, you

1. What quality did Jesus emphasize shortly before his death?
2. Why is showing love so important for Christians?

3. What admonition regarding love did the apostle Paul give?

do not need us to be writing you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and, in fact, you are doing it to all the brothers." Even so, Paul added: "Go on doing it in fuller measure." (1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9, 10) We too need to take Paul's admonition to heart and endeavor to show love for one another "in fuller measure."

⁴ In the same inspired letter, Paul encouraged his fellow believers to "speak consolingly to the depressed souls" and to "support the weak." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) On another occasion, he reminded Christians that those "who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those not strong." (Romans 15:1) Jesus too gave instructions concerning helping those who are weak. After foretelling that on the night of his arrest Peter would abandon him, Jesus told Peter: "Once you have returned, strengthen your brothers." Why? Because they would also have forsaken Jesus and thus would have needed help. (Luke 22:32; John 21:15-17) Hence, God's Word directs us to extend our love to those who are spiritually weak and who may have lost contact with the Christian congregation. (Hebrews 12:12) Why should we do so? Two vivid illustrations given by Jesus provide the answer.

A Lost Sheep and a Lost Coin

⁵ To teach his listeners Jehovah's view of those who have strayed, Jesus gave two brief illustrations. One was about a shepherd. Jesus said: "What man of you with a hundred sheep, on losing one of them, will not leave the ninety-nine behind in the wilderness and go for the lost one until he finds it? And when he has found it he puts it upon his

4. According to Paul and Jesus, to whom should we give special consideration?
- 5, 6. (a) What two brief illustrations did Jesus tell? (b) What do these illustrations reveal about Jehovah?

shoulders and rejoices. And when he gets home he calls his friends and his neighbors together, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.' I tell you that thus there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who have no need of repentance."—Luke 15:4-7.

⁶ The second illustration was about a woman. Jesus said: "What woman with ten drachma coins, if she loses one drachma coin, does not light a lamp and sweep her house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it she calls the women who are her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found the drachma coin that I lost.' Thus, I tell you, joy arises among the angels of God over one sinner that repents."—Luke 15:8-10.

⁷ What can we learn from these brief illustrations? They show us (1) how we should *feel* about those who have grown weak and (2) what we should *do* to help them. Let us consider these points.

Lost but Valued

⁸ In both illustrations something had been lost, but note the reaction of the owners. The shepherd did not say: 'What's one sheep when I still have 99? I can get along without it.' The woman did not say: 'Why worry about that one coin? I'm content with the nine I still have.' Rather, the shepherd searched for his lost sheep as if it were the only one he possessed. And the woman felt the loss of her coin as if she had no other coins. In both instances the missing object remained precious in the mind of the owner. What does this illustrate?

7. What two lessons do the illustrations of the lost sheep and the lost coin contain for us?
8. (a) How did the shepherd and the woman react to their loss? (b) What does their reaction tell us about how they viewed the missing possession?

⁹ Note Jesus' conclusion in both cases: "Thus there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents" and "thus, I tell you, joy arises among the angels of God over one sinner that repents." The concern of the shepherd and the woman reflects, therefore, in its own small way, the feelings of Jehovah and his heavenly creatures. Just as what was lost remained precious in the eyes of the shepherd and of the woman, so those who have drifted away and lost contact with God's people remain precious in Jehovah's eyes. (Jeremiah 31:3) Such individuals may be spiritually weak, yet they are not necessarily rebellious. Despite their weakened state, to some extent they may still be keeping Jehovah's requirements. (Psalm 119:176; Acts 15:29) Hence, as in times past, Jehovah is slow to "cast them away from before his face." —2 Kings 13:23.

¹⁰ Like Jehovah and Jesus, we too are deeply concerned about those who are weak and missing from the Christian congregation. (Ezekiel 34:16; Luke 19:10) We view a spiritually weak individual as a lost sheep—not a lost cause. We do not reason: 'Why worry about a weak one? The congregation is getting along just fine without him.' Rather, like Jehovah, we view those who have drifted away but who want to return as being valuable.

¹¹ How, though, can we express our feelings of concern? Jesus' two illustrations indicate that we can do so (1) by taking the initiative, (2) by being gentle, and (3) by being earnest. Let us look at these aspects one at a time.

9. What is illustrated by the concern shown by the shepherd and the woman?
10, 11. (a) How do we want to view those who have drifted away from the congregation? (b) According to Jesus' two illustrations, how can we express our concern for them?



Take the Initiative

¹² In the first of the two illustrations, Jesus says that the shepherd will "go for the lost one." The shepherd takes the initiative and makes a deliberate effort to find the missing sheep. Hardship, danger, and distance do not hold him back. On the contrary, the shepherd persists "until he finds it." —Luke 15:4.

¹³ Similarly, reaching out to a person in need of encouragement often requires that the stronger one take the initiative. Faithful men of old understood this. For instance, when Jonathan, King Saul's son, noticed that his bosom friend David was in need of encouragement, Jonathan "rose up and went to David at Horesh, that he might strengthen his hand in regard to God." (1 Samuel 23:15, 16) Centuries later, when Governor Nehemiah saw that some of his Jewish brothers had grown weak, he too "immediately rose" up and encouraged them 'to keep Jehovah in mind.' (Nehemiah 4:14) We today will also want to 'rise up'—take the initiative—to strengthen those who are weak. But who in the congregation should do so?

12. What do the words "go for the lost one" tell us about the shepherd's attitude?
13. How did faithful men of old respond to the needs of weak ones, and how can we imitate such Biblical examples?

¹⁴ Christian elders, in particular, have the responsibility to "strengthen the weak hands . . . and make the knees that are wobbling firm" and to "say to those who are anxious at heart: 'Be strong. Do not be afraid.'" (Isaiah 35:3, 4; 1 Peter 5:1, 2) Note, however, that Paul's admonition to "speak consolingly to the depressed souls" and to "support the weak" was not given to elders only. Rather, Paul's words were directed to the entire "congregation of the Thessalonians." (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 5:14) Reaching out to those who are weak is thus a task for all Christians. Like the shepherd in the illustration, each Christian should be moved to "go for the lost one." Of course, this is done most effectively in cooperation with the elders. Could you take some steps to assist a weak one in your congregation?

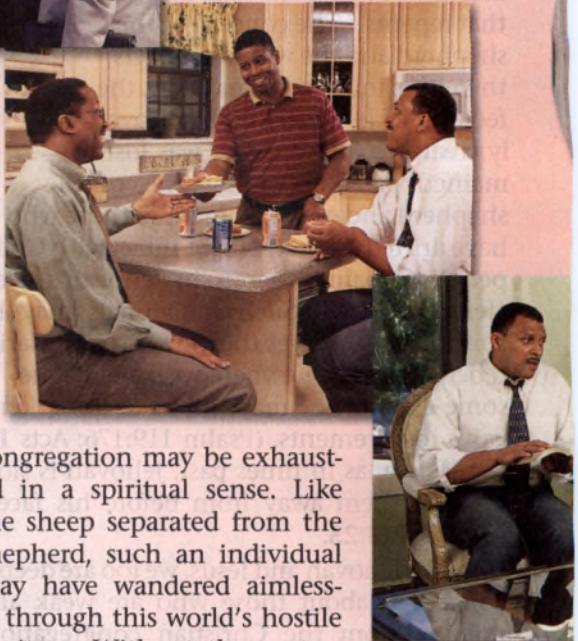
Be Gentle

¹⁵ What does the shepherd do when he finally finds the lost sheep? "He puts it upon his shoulders." (Luke 15:5) What a touching and telling detail! The sheep may have wandered for days and nights through unfamiliar territory, perhaps even being exposed to the threat of stalking lions. (Job 38:39, 40) No doubt the sheep is weakened by a lack of food. It is simply too frail to overcome in its own strength the hurdles it will encounter on the way back to the fold. Therefore, the shepherd bends down, gently lifts up the sheep, and carries it across all obstacles back to the flock. How can we reflect the care shown by this shepherd?

- ¹⁶ A person who has lost contact with the congregation may be exhausted in a spiritual sense. Like the sheep separated from the shepherd, such an individual may have wandered aimlessly through this world's hostile territory. Without the protection provided by the fold, the Christian congregation, he is exposed more than ever to the attacks of the Devil, who "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (1 Peter 5:8) Additionally, he is weakened by a lack of spiritual food. Hence, on his own he likely is too weak to overcome the hurdles he will encounter on his journey back to the congregation. Therefore, we need to bend down, so to speak, gently lift up the weak one, and carry him back. (Galatians 6:2) How may we accomplish that?
14. Who in the Christian congregation should reach out to those who are weak?
 15. Why may the shepherd have acted in the way that he did?
 16. Why should we reflect the tenderness that the shepherd showed toward the strayed sheep?



In helping weak ones, we take the initiative and are gentle and earnest



congregation may be exhausted in a spiritual sense. Like the sheep separated from the shepherd, such an individual may have wandered aimlessly through this world's hostile territory. Without the protection provided by the fold, the Christian congregation, he is exposed more than ever to the attacks of the Devil, who "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (1 Peter 5:8) Additionally, he is weakened by a lack of spiritual food. Hence, on his own he likely is too weak to overcome the hurdles he will encounter on his journey back to the congregation. Therefore, we need to bend down, so to speak, gently lift up the weak one, and carry him back. (Galatians 6:2) How may we accomplish that?

- ¹⁷ The apostle Paul said: "If anyone is weak, do I not share his weakness?" (2 Corinthians 11:29, *The New English Bible*; 1 Corinthians 9:22) Paul had empathy for people, including
17. How can we imitate the apostle Paul when we visit someone who is weak?



the weak. We want to display similar fellow feeling for those who are weak. When visiting a spiritually weak Christian, reassure him that he is valuable in Jehovah's

eyes and dearly missed by his fellow Witnesses. (1 Thessalonians 2:17) Let him know that they are ready to give him support and are willing to be for him "a brother that is born for when there is distress." (Proverbs 17:17; Psalm 34:18) Our heartfelt expressions may gently and gradually lift him up to the point that he is able to return to the flock. What should we do next? The illustration of the woman and the lost coin gives us guidance.

Be Earnest

¹⁸ The woman who loses the coin knows that the situation is challenging but not hopeless. Had the coin been dropped in a

18. (a) Why did the woman in the illustration not feel hopeless? (b) What earnest efforts did the woman put forth, and with what result?

Helping those who are weak brings blessings to all

large, bushy field or in a deep, muddy lake, she probably would have given it up as lost beyond recovery. However, knowing that the coin must be somewhere in her house, within reach, she begins a thorough and earnest search. (Luke 15:8) First, she lights a lamp to brighten her dark house. Then, she sweeps the floor with her broom, hoping to hear a tinkling sound. Finally, she carefully searches every nook and cranny until the lamp catches a glint of a silver coin. The woman's earnest effort is rewarded!

¹⁹ As this detail of the illustration reminds us, the Scriptural obligation to help a weak Christian is not beyond our abilities. At the same time, we realize that it requires effort. After all, the apostle Paul said to the Ephesian elders: "By thus laboring you must assist those who are weak." (Acts 20:35a) Keep in mind that the woman does not find the coin by looking around her house casually, just here and there, or incidentally, just now and then. No, she succeeds because she systematically searches "until she finds it." Likewise, when we endeavor to regain a spiritually weak individual, our approach needs to be earnest and purposeful. What can we do?

²⁰ How can we help a weak one build up faith and appreciation? A personal Bible study in an appropriate Christian publication may be just what is needed. Indeed, conducting a Bible study with a weak individual allows us to assist him in a consistent and thorough way. It is likely that the service overseer could best determine who might provide the needed assistance. He may suggest what subjects could be studied and which publication

19. What lessons in helping weak ones can we draw from the actions of the woman in the illustration of the lost coin?

20. What can be done to help weak ones?

would be most helpful. Just as the woman in the illustration uses helpful tools to accomplish her task, so today we have tools that help us to accomplish our God-given responsibility to assist those who are weak. Two of our new tools, or publications, will be especially helpful in this endeavor. They are the books *Worship the Only True God* and *Draw Close to Jehovah*.*

²¹ Assisting those who are weak brings blessings to all. The one being helped enjoys the happiness of becoming reunited with true friends. We experience the heartfelt joy that only giving can bring. (Luke 15:6, 9; Acts 20:35b) The congregation as a whole grows in warmth as each member takes a loving interest in others.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

21. How does helping those who are weak bring blessings to all?

terest in others. And above all, honor goes to our caring Shepherds, Jehovah and Jesus, as their desire to support the weak is reflected in their earthly servants. (Psalm 72:12-14; Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1) What good reasons we have, therefore, to continue 'having love among ourselves'!

Can You Explain?

- Why is showing love essential for each one of us?
- Why should we extend our love to those who are weak?
- What lessons do the illustrations of the lost sheep and the lost coin teach us?
- What practical steps can we take to help someone who is weak?

"KEEP BEARING MUCH FRUIT"

"Keep bearing much fruit and prove yourselves my disciples." —JOHN 15:8.

IT WAS the evening before his death. Jesus had taken ample time to encourage his apostles with a heart-to-heart talk. By now, it must have been past midnight, but Jesus, moved by love for his close friends, continued speaking. Then, in the midst of his conversation, he reminded them of one more requirement they needed to meet to remain his disciples. He said: "My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit and prove yourselves my disciples." (John 15:8) Do we today meet this requirement of discipleship? What does it mean to be "bearing

much fruit"? To find out, let us return to the conversation that evening.

² The admonition to bear fruit is part of an illustration that Jesus related to his apostles. He said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the cultivator. Every branch in me not bearing fruit he takes away, and every one bearing fruit he cleans, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in union with me, and I in union with you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remains in the vine, in the same way neither can you, unless you remain in union with

1. (a) What requirement of discipleship did Jesus mention to his apostles? (b) What question should we ask ourselves?

2. What illustration about fruit does Jesus relate on the evening before his death?

me. I am the vine, you are the branches. . . . My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit and prove yourselves my disciples. Just as the Father has loved me and I have loved you, remain in my love. If you observe my commandments, you will remain in my love.”—John 15:1-10.

³ In this illustration Jehovah is the Cultivator, Jesus is the vine, and the apostles whom Jesus was addressing are the branches. As long as the apostles strove to “remain in union” with Jesus, they would bear fruit. Jesus then explained how the apostles could succeed in maintaining this vital unity: “If you observe my commandments, you will remain in my love.” Later, the apostle John would write similar words to fellow Christians: “He who observes [Christ’s] commandments remains in union with him.”* (1 John 2:24; 3:24) Hence, by keeping Christ’s commandments, his followers remain in union with him, and that unity, in turn, enables them to bear fruit. What characterizes the fruitage that we need to bear?

Room for Growth

⁴ In the illustration of the vine, Jehovah “takes away,” or lops off, a branch when it does not bear fruit. What does this tell us? It tells us not only that all disciples are required to bear fruit but also that all are capable of doing so, no matter what their circumstances or limitations may be. After all, it would be contrary to Jehovah’s loving ways to ‘take away,’ or disqualify, a disciple of Christ for failing to accomplish something that was beyond

* Although the vine’s branches in the illustration refer to Jesus’ apostles and other Christians who are in line for a place in God’s heavenly Kingdom, the illustration contains truths from which all of Christ’s followers today can benefit.—John 3:16; 10:16.

3. What must Jesus’ followers do in order to bear fruit?

4. What can we learn from the fact that Jehovah “takes away” every branch not bearing fruit?

his reach.—Psalm 103:14; Colossians 3:23; 1 John 5:3.

⁵ Jesus’ illustration of the vine also shows that within the limits of our circumstances, we must make room for growth in our activities as a disciple. Note how Jesus puts it: “Every branch in me not bearing fruit he takes away, and every one bearing fruit he cleans, that it may bear *more fruit*.” (John 15:2) Toward the end of the illustration, Jesus urged his followers to bear “*much fruit*.” (Verse 8) What is the message here? As disciples, we should never become complacent. (Revelation 3:14, 15, 19) Rather, we should look for ways to make progress in bearing fruit. What kind of fruitage should we endeavor to bear more abundantly? There are (1) “the fruitage of the spirit” and (2) the Kingdom fruitage.—Galatians 5:22, 23; Matthew 24:14.

The Fruitage of Christian Qualities

⁶ Listed first among “the fruitage of the spirit” is love. God’s holy spirit produces love within Christians, for they obey the command that Jesus gave shortly before he spoke the illustration of the fruit-producing vine. He told his apostles: “I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another.” (John 13:34) In fact, throughout his conversation that final night of his earthly life, Jesus repeatedly reminded the apostles of the need to show the quality of love.—John 14:15, 21, 23, 24; 15:12, 13, 17.

⁷ Peter, present that night, understood that Christlike love and related qualities are to be manifest among genuine disciples of Christ. Years later, Peter encouraged Christians

5. (a) How does Jesus’ illustration indicate that we can make progress in being fruitful? (b) What two kinds of fruitage will we consider?

6. How did Jesus Christ stress the value of the first-mentioned fruit of the spirit?

7. How did the apostle Peter show that bearing fruit relates to manifesting Christlike qualities?

to cultivate such qualities as self-control, brotherly affection, and love. He added that doing so prevents us "from being either inactive or unfruitful." (2 Peter 1:5-8) Whatever our circumstances, manifesting the fruitage of the spirit is within our reach. May we, therefore, strive to show love, kindness, mildness, and other Christlike qualities to a fuller extent, for "against such things there is no law," or limit. (Galatians 5:23) Indeed, let us bear "*more fruit*."

Bearing Kingdom Fruit

⁸ Colorful and succulent fruits adorn a plant. However, the value of such fruits goes far beyond that of adornment. Fruits are also vital for propagating the plant through their seeds. Likewise, the fruitage of the spirit does much more than adorn our Christian personality. Qualities like love and faith also motivate us to spread the seedlike Kingdom message found in God's Word. Notice how the apostle Paul stresses this vital link. He says: "We too exercise faith [a part of the fruitage of the spirit] and therefore we speak." (2 Corinthians 4:13) In this way, Paul further explains, we "offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips"—the second kind of

8. (a) What is the link between the fruitage of the spirit and Kingdom fruitage? (b) What question deserves our consideration?

fruitage that we need to manifest. (Hebrews 13:15) Is there room in our life to be more fruitful, indeed to bear "much fruit," as proclaimers of God's Kingdom?

⁹ To answer properly, we need first to understand what constitutes Kingdom fruitage. Would it be correct to conclude that bearing fruit means making disciples? (Matthew 28:19) Does the fruit that we would bear refer primarily to individuals whom we help to become baptized worshipers of Jehovah? No. If that were the case, the situation would be deeply discouraging for all those dear Witnesses who have been faithfully proclaiming the Kingdom message for years in less responsive territories. Why, if the Kingdom fruit that we bear is represented only by new disciples, such hardworking Witnesses would be like the barren branches in Jesus' illustration! Of course, that is not the case. Then, what is the primary Kingdom fruitage of our ministry?

Fruitful by Spreading Kingdom Seed

¹⁰ Jesus' illustration of the sower and the different types of soil points to the answer—a heartening answer for those who witness in less productive territories. Jesus said that the seed is the Kingdom message found in God's

9. Does bearing fruit equal making disciples? Explain.

10. How does Jesus' illustration of the sower and the different types of soil show what Kingdom fruitage is and what it is not?



By manifesting the fruitage of the spirit and by proclaiming the Kingdom message, we bear much fruit

HOW TO "BEAR FRUIT WITH ENDURANCE"

WHAT helps you to continue faithfully preaching the Kingdom message in less responsive territories? Here are some helpful answers to this question.

"Knowing that we have Jesus' full support inspires optimism and perseverance, whatever the reaction in the territory."—Harry, age 72; baptized 1946.

"The scripture 2 Corinthians 2:17 always encourages me. It says that we share in the ministry 'under God's view, in company with Christ.' When I'm in the ministry, I enjoy the company of my best friends."—Claudio, age 43; baptized 1974.

"Frankly, the preaching work is a personal struggle for me. Yet, I experience the truth of the words found at Psalm 18:29: 'By my God I can climb a wall!'"—Gerard, age 79; baptized 1955.

"If I can read just one scripture in the ministry, it satisfies me that someone had his heart examined by the Bible."—Eleanor, age 26; baptized 1989.

Word and that the soil represents man's figurative heart. Some seed "fell upon the good soil, and, after sprouting, it produced fruit." (Luke 8:8) What fruit? Well, after a wheat stalk sprouts and matures, it produces as fruit, not little wheat stalks, but new seed. Likewise, a Christian produces as fruit, not necessarily new disciples, but new Kingdom seed.

¹¹ Therefore, the fruitage in this case is neither new disciples nor fine Christian qualities. Since the seed that is sown is the word of the Kingdom, the fruitage must be a many-fold duplication of that seed. The bearing of fruitage in this case refers to making expres-

11. How may Kingdom fruitage be defined?



"I keep trying different approaches. There are so many that I will not be able to use them all in the remaining years of my life."—Paul, age 79; baptized 1940.

"I do not take negative responses personally. I try to have a relaxed approach, conversing with people and listening to their viewpoint."—Daniel, age 75; baptized 1946.

"I have met newly baptized ones who told me that my preaching work played a part in their becoming Witnesses. Unknown to me, someone else later studied the Bible with them and helped them to progress. It gives me joy to know that our ministry is a team effort."—Joan, age 66; baptized 1954.

What helps you to "bear fruit with endurance"?—Luke 8:15.

ions about the Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Is bearing such Kingdom fruitage—proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom—within reach, no matter what our circumstances may be? Yes, it is! In the same illustration, Jesus explains why.

Giving Our Best for God's Glory

¹² "The one sown upon the fine soil," said Jesus, "produces, this one a hundred-fold, that one sixty, the other thirty." (Matthew 13:23) Grain sown in a field may vary in production according to circumstances. Similarly, what we can do in proclaiming

12. Is bearing Kingdom fruitage within reach of all Christians? Explain.

the good news may vary according to our circumstances, and Jesus showed that he recognized this. Some may have more opportunities; others may have better health and more vigor. Thus, what we are able to do may be more or may be less than what others do, but as long as it represents our best, Jehovah is pleased. (Galatians 6:4) Even if advanced age or enfeebling illness limits our share in the preaching work, our compassionate Father, Jehovah, no doubt views us as one of those who "keep bearing much fruit." Why? Because we give him 'all of what we have'—our whole-souled service.*—Mark 12:43, 44; Luke 10:27.

¹³ To whatever extent we are able to produce Kingdom fruitage, we will be moved to "go on and keep bearing fruit" when we keep in mind why we are doing so. (John 15:16) Jesus mentioned the foremost reason: "My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit." (John 15:8) Yes, our preaching activity sanctifies Jehovah's name before all mankind. (Psalm 109:30) Honor, a faithful Witness in her mid-70's, notes: "Even in less responsive territories, it is a privilege to repre-

* Those who are confined to their homes because of old age or sickness may be able to witness by letters or, where permissible, by telephone, or perhaps they can share the good news with those who visit.

13. (a) What is the foremost reason for us to "go on" bearing Kingdom fruitage? (b) What will help us to keep bearing fruit in less responsive territories? (See box on page 21.)

Questions for Review

- What kind of fruitage do we need to bear more abundantly?
- Why is the goal of "bearing much fruit" within our reach?
- What three important requirements for discipleship mentioned in the Gospel of John have we considered?

sent the Most High." When Claudio, who has been a zealous Witness since 1974, was asked why he continues to preach even though few in his territory respond, he quoted John 4:34, where we read Jesus' words: "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." Claudio added: "Like Jesus, I want not only to begin but also to finish my work as a Kingdom proclaiming." (John 17:4) Witnesses of Jehovah worldwide agree.—See the box "How to 'Bear Fruit With Endurance,'" on page 21.

To Preach and to Teach

¹⁴ The first Kingdom proclaimer mentioned in the Gospels is John the Baptizer. (Matthew 3:1, 2; Luke 3:18) His primary purpose was "to bear witness," and he did so with heartfelt faith and with the hope "that people of all sorts might believe." (John 1:6, 7) Indeed, some to whom John preached became disciples of Christ. (John 1:35-37) Hence, John was a preacher as well as a disciple maker. Jesus too was a preacher and a teacher. (Matthew 4:23; 11:1) Not surprisingly, then, Jesus commanded his followers not only to preach the Kingdom message but also to help individuals who accept it to become his disciples. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Our work today is thus a combination of preaching and teaching.

¹⁵ Of those in the first century C.E. who heard Paul preach and teach, "some began to believe the things said; others would not believe." (Acts 28:24) Today, the response is much the same. Sadly, most Kingdom seed falls on unreceptive soil. Even so, some seeds still fall on fine soil, take root, and sprout, just as Jesus foretold. In fact, worldwide, an aver-

14. (a) What twofold purpose did the work of John the Baptizer and of Jesus have? (b) How would you describe the Christian activity today?

15. What similarity is there in the response to the preaching work performed in the first century C.E. and that carried out today?

*What did Jesus mean
when he told his apostles:
"Keep bearing much fruit"?*

age of over 5,000 people become genuine disciples of Christ each week of the year! These new disciples "believe the things said," although most other people do not. What helped in making their heart receptive to the Kingdom message? Often the personal interest shown by the Witnesses—the watering of the newly sown seed, as it were—made the difference. (1 Corinthians 3:6) Consider just two of many examples.

Personal Interest Makes a Difference

¹⁶ Karolien, a young Witness in Belgium, called on an elderly woman who showed no interest in the Kingdom message. Since the woman's hand was wrapped in a bandage, Karolien and her companion offered help, but the woman declined. Two days later the same Witnesses returned to the woman's home and asked her how she was feeling. "This made the difference," said Karolien. "She was amazed to see that we were really interested in her as a person. She invited us into her home, and a Bible study was started."

¹⁷ Sandi, a Witness in the United States, also shows personal interest in those to whom she preaches. She looks up birth announcements in a local newspaper and then calls on the new parents with *My Book of Bible Stories*.* Since the mother is usually home and proud to show visitors her baby, often a conversation ensues. "I talk with the parents about the importance of bonding with a



newborn through reading," explains Sandi. "Later I talk about the challenges of raising a child in today's society." Recently, as a result of such a call, a mother and six children began serving Jehovah. Showing initiative and personal interest may lead to similar joyful results in our ministry.

¹⁸ How reassuring it is to know that the requirement to "keep bearing much fruit" is within our reach! Whether we are young or old, whether we have good health or poor health, whether we preach in receptive or less receptive territories, all of us are able to bear much fruit. How? By manifesting the fruitage of the spirit to a fuller extent and by spreading the message of God's Kingdom to the best of our abilities. At the same time, we strive to 'remain in Jesus' word' and to 'have love among ourselves.' Yes, by meeting these three important requirements of discipleship mentioned in the Gospel of John, we prove that we "are really [Christ's] disciples."—John 8:31; 13:35.

18. (a) Why is the requirement to 'bear much fruit' within reach of all of us? (b) What three requirements of discipleship mentioned in the Gospel of John are you determined to meet?

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

16, 17. Why is it important to show personal interest in those whom we meet in our ministry?

They Are “Hearing” the Kingdom Message in Brazil

IN ORDER to proclaim the Kingdom good news in the Deaf community, many of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Brazil have accepted the challenge of learning Brazilian Sign Language. Their efforts are producing excellent results, as the following experiences illustrate.

Eva,* a deaf woman in São Paulo, started to learn sign language after she and her three children moved in with a deaf man. At a shopping mall, Eva and her boyfriend met a group of deaf Witnesses and were invited to a meeting at the Kingdom Hall. They accepted, thinking that it was to be a social event.

Because of her limited knowledge of sign language, Eva understood very little of what was said at the meeting. Afterward, a couple of Witnesses invited her to their home for a snack. Using pictures in the brochure *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!*, they explained God’s promise of a future earthly paradise. Eva liked what she learned and began to attend the meetings regularly.

Soon thereafter, Eva left her boyfriend in order to live by Bible standards. Despite violent opposition from her family, she continued to make spiritual progress and was baptized in 1995. Six months later, Eva enrolled as a pioneer, or full-time Kingdom proclaimer. She has since helped four deaf people to the point of dedication and baptism.

* Names have been changed.

Carlos was born deaf. From childhood he became involved in drugs, immorality, and theft.

Threatened by rival gang members, he fled to São Paulo and stayed with João for a time. João, like Carlos, was deaf and led a wayward life.

Some years later, Carlos learned the Kingdom message, moving him to clean up his life and legalize his marriage. After meeting the Scriptural requirements, Carlos was baptized in symbol of his dedication to Jehovah. Meanwhile, unknown to Carlos, João had also become acquainted with the good news, and he too made great changes in his life. On learning that Jehovah does not approve of the use of images, João threw away his collection of “saints.” After abandoning his former life-style, João also got baptized.

How overjoyed Carlos and João were when they met at a Kingdom Hall and saw the changes that each had made! Both are now responsible family heads and serve as zealous Kingdom proclaimers.

In Brazil, there are currently 30 sign-language congregations and 154 groups, with over 2,500 publishers, of whom some 1,500 are deaf. At Brazil’s 2001 “Teachers of God’s Word” District Conventions for the deaf, more than 3,000 attended, and 36 were baptized. With Jehovah’s blessing, hopefully many more deaf ones will accept the Kingdom message.





TESTED IN A FIERY FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

AS TOLD BY
PERICLES YANNOURIS

The dampness of the musty cell chilled my bones. As I sat there alone, with only a thin blanket over me, I could still see the stone-cold look on my young wife's face as militiamen dragged me from my house two days earlier, leaving behind her and our two sick babies. Later, my wife, who did not share my beliefs, sent me a parcel and a note that said: "I am sending you these cakes, and I hope that you get as sick as your children." Would I ever return alive to see my family?

THAT was just one episode in a long and arduous fight for the Christian faith, a struggle that involved family opposition, community ostracism, legal battles, and fierce persecution. But how and why did I, a quiet and God-fearing individual, end up in that miserable place? Please allow me to explain.

A Poor Boy With a Lofty Dream

When I was born in 1909 in Stavromeno, Crete, the country was struggling with war,

poverty, and famine. Later, my four younger siblings and I barely escaped the onslaught of the Spanish flu. I remember that our parents shut us in our house for weeks at a time so that we would not catch the flu.

Father, a poor farmer, was a deeply religious but open-minded man. Having lived in France and Madagascar, he had been exposed to progressive ideas about religion. Still, our family remained loyal to the Greek Orthodox Church, attending Mass every Sunday and

opening our home for the local bishop to stay during his annual visit. I was a choirboy, and my life's dream was to become a priest.

In 1929, I joined the police force. I was on duty in Thessalonica, in northern Greece, when Father died. Seeking solace and spiritual enlightenment, I secured a transfer to the police force of Mount Athos, a nearby monastic community revered by Orthodox Christians as the "holy mountain."^{*} I served there for four years and observed monastic life at close quarters. Instead of being drawn closer to God, I was appalled by the monks' blatant immorality and corruption. I was disgusted when an archimandrite whom I had respected made immoral advances toward me. Despite such disillusionment, I still sincerely wanted to serve God and to become a priest. I even donned a priest's robe and had a photograph taken as a keepsake. Eventually, I moved back to Crete.

"He's a Devil!"

In 1942, I married a lovely girl, Frosini, who came from a respected family. Marriage reinforced my decision to become a priest, as my in-laws were deeply religious.[#] I was determined to go to Athens to study at a seminary. In late 1943, I arrived at Iráklion harbor, Crete, but did not leave for Athens. That might have been because, in the meantime, I had found a different source of spiritual refreshment. What had happened?

For some years, Emmanuel Lionoudakis, an energetic young preacher associated with Jehovah's Witnesses, had been teaching eye-opening Bible truths all over Crete.[△] Some people were attracted by the clear understanding of God's Word offered by the Witnesses and abandoned false religion. In the

* See *The Watchtower*, December 1, 1999, pages 30-1.

[#] Priests of the Greek Orthodox Church are permitted to marry.

[△] For the life story of Emmanuel Lionoudakis, see *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1999, pages 25-9.

nearby city of Sitía, a group of enthusiastic Witnesses was organized. This bothered the local bishop, who—having lived in the United States—knew firsthand how effective Jehovah's Witnesses could be as preachers. He was determined to stamp out this "heresy" in his domain. At his instigation, the police regularly dragged the Witnesses to jail and before the courts on a variety of false allegations.

One of these Witnesses tried to explain Bible truth to me, but he surmised that I was not interested. He therefore sent a more experienced minister to speak to me. My brusque response evidently made the second Witness return to the little group and report: "It's impossible for Pericles to become a Witness. He's a devil!"

First Taste of Opposition

I am glad that God did not view me in that way. In February 1945 my brother Demosthenes, who was convinced that Jehovah's Witnesses taught the truth, gave me the booklet *Comfort All That Mourn*.^{*} Its contents impressed me. We immediately stopped attending the Orthodox Church, joined the small group at Sitía, and witnessed to our siblings about our newfound faith. All of them accepted the Bible's truth. As expected, my decision to abandon false religion brought ostracism and hostility from my wife and her family. For a time my father-in-law refused even to speak to me. At home, there were disagreements and continuous tension. Despite this, on May 21, 1945, Demosthenes and I were baptized by Brother Minos Kokkinakis.[#]

At last I was able to realize my dream and serve as a genuine minister of God! I still remember my first day in the house-to-house ministry. With 35 booklets in my bag, I went

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses but now out of print.

[#] For a legal victory involving Minos Kokkinakis, see *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1993, pages 27-31.

alone by bus to a village. Timidly, I started going from house to house. The farther I went, the more courageous I became. When an irate priest arrived, I was able to stand up to him courageously, ignoring his persistent demand that I accompany him to the police station. I told him that I would leave only when I had visited the whole village, and that was exactly what I did. I was so happy that I did not even wait for the bus to come but walked the ten miles back home.

Minos Kokkinakis (third from right) and me (fourth from left) on the penal island of Makrónisos



Makrónisos An Island of Terror

For ten years, from 1947 to 1957, the arid and desolate island of Makrónisos played host to more than 100,000 prisoners. Among these were scores of faithful Witnesses who were sent there because of their Christian neutrality. The instigators of their banishment were usually Greek Orthodox clergymen who falsely accused the Witnesses of being Communists.

Regarding the process of "reform" used in Makrónisos, the Greek encyclopedia *Papyrus Larousse Britannica* observes: "The methods of cruel torture, . . . the living conditions, which are unacceptable for a civilized nation, and the guards' degrading behavior toward inmates . . . are a disgrace to the history of Greece."

Some Witnesses were told that they would never be released unless they renounced their religious beliefs. Nonetheless, the integrity of the Witnesses remained unbroken. What is more, some political prisoners came to embrace Bible truth as a result of their contact with the Witnesses.

In the Hands of Ruthless Thugs

In September 1945, I was given added responsibilities in our newly formed congregation in Sitía. Soon civil war broke out in Greece. Partisan groups turned on one another with savage hatred. Taking advantage of the situation, the bishop urged a local guerrilla group to get rid of the Witnesses by any means they saw fit. (John 16:2) As the

guerrilla band headed to our village by bus, a friendly lady on board overheard their plans to carry out their "God-ordained" deed, and she warned us. We hid ourselves, and one of our relatives intervened in our behalf. Our lives were spared.

This set the stage for more affliction to come. Beatings and intimidation became the order of the day. Our opposers tried to force us to go back to church, to christen our children, and to make the sign of the cross. On one occasion, they beat my brother until they thought he was dead. It pained me to see my two sisters having their clothes torn and then being beaten. During that period, the church forcibly christened eight children of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In 1949 my mother died. The priest came after us again, accusing us of not complying with the legal requirements for the funeral permit. I was tried in the court and acquitted. This gave a great witness, since Jehovah's name was heard during the opening remarks of the case. The only means left to our enemies to "bring us to our senses" was to arrest us and send us into exile. This they did in April 1949.

Into a Fiery Furnace

I was one of three brothers who were arrested. My wife did not even come to see me at the local police station. Our first stop was a prison in Iráklion. As described at the outset, I was lonely and dejected. I had left behind a young wife who did not share my beliefs and two infants. I prayed fervently to Jehovah for help. God's words as recorded at Hebrews 13:5 came to mind: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you." I realized the wisdom of putting my implicit trust in Jehovah.—Proverbs 3:5.

We learned that we were going to be exiled to Makrónisos, a barren island off the coast of Attica, Greece. Mere mention of Makrónisos

was enough to fill anyone with terror because the prison camp there was associated with torture and slave labor. On the way to prison, we stopped at Piraeus. Though still in handcuffs, we were encouraged when some of our fellow believers came onto the boat and embraced us.—Acts 28:14, 15.

Life in Makrónisos was a nightmare. The soldiers mistreated the inmates from morning till night. Many non-Witness prisoners lost their sanity, others died, and a great number were left physically disabled. During the night, we heard the cries and groanings of those being tortured. My thin blanket provided little warmth during the cold nights.

Gradually, Jehovah's Witnesses became well-known in the camp because the name was mentioned during roll call every morning. Thus, we had many opportunities to give a witness. I even had the privilege of baptizing a political prisoner who had progressed to the point of dedicating his life to Jehovah.

During my exile, I kept writing to my dear wife without ever receiving a reply from her. This did not stop me from writing to her in tenderness, offering comfort, assuring her that this was just a temporary setback and that we would be happy again.

Meanwhile, our numbers swelled as more brothers arrived. Working in the office, I struck up an acquaintance with the commanding colonel of the camp. Since he respected the Witnesses, I mustered up the courage to ask him if we could receive some Bible literature from our office in Athens. "That is impossible," he said, "but why don't your people in Athens pack it in your baggage, write my name on it, and send it to me?" I stood there dumbfounded! A few days later as we were unloading an incoming boat, a policeman saluted the colonel and informed him: "Sir, your baggage has arrived." "What baggage?" he replied.

I just happened to be nearby and to overhear the conversation, so I whispered to him: "It's probably ours, which was sent in your name, as you ordered." That was one of the ways Jehovah made sure that we were fed spiritually.

An Unexpected Blessing —Then More Affliction

At the end of 1950, I was discharged. I returned home—sickly, pale, emaciated, and unsure about the reception I would get. How happy I was to see my wife and children again! Better still, I was surprised to find that Frosini's hostility had diminished. Those letters from prison had proved effective. Frosini had been touched by my endurance and persistence. Shortly afterward, I had a long, conciliatory discussion with her. She accepted a Bible study and developed faith in Jehovah and his promises. One of the happiest days of my life was in 1952 when I baptized her as a dedicated servant of Jehovah!

In 1955 we launched a campaign to distribute to every priest a copy of the booklet *Christendom or Christianity—Which One Is "the Light of the World?"* I was arrested and brought to trial, along with a number of fellow Witnesses. There were so many cases against Jehovah's Witnesses that the court had to hold a special session to hear all of them. On that day, the whole legal establishment of the province was present, and the courtroom was jam-packed with priests. The bishop paced up and down the aisles. One of the priests had filed a complaint of proselytism against me. The judge asked him: "Is your faith so weak that you could be converted by reading a brochure?" This left the priest



Working with a fellow Witness in Sitia, Crete, where I served in my youth

speechless. I was acquitted, but some brothers were sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

In the years that followed, we were arrested repeatedly, and the court cases multiplied. Handling the trials kept our lawyers on the run constantly. I was taken to court a total of 17 times. Despite the opposition, we were regular in our preaching activity. We happily accepted this challenge, and the fiery trials refined our faith.—James 1:2, 3.

New Privileges and Challenges

In 1957 we moved to Athens. Soon I was appointed to serve in a newly formed congregation. The wholehearted support of my wife allowed us to keep our life simple and our priorities focused on spiritual activities. Thus we were able to devote most of our time to the preaching work. Over the years, we were asked to move to various congregations where there was a need.

In 1963 my son turned 21 and had to report for conscription. Because of their neutral stand, all conscripted Witnesses suffered beatings, mockings, and humiliations. That was also the experience of my son. So I gave him my blanket from Makrónisos to encourage him in a symbolic way to follow the example of former integrity keepers. The brothers who were called up were court-martialed and usually received a sentence of from two to four years. Upon release they were called up and sentenced again. As a religious minister, I was able to visit various prisons and had limited contact with my son and other faithful Witnesses. My son was kept in prison for more than six years.

Jehovah Carried Us Through

After religious freedom was restored in Greece, I had the privilege of serving as

a temporary special pioneer on the island of Rhodes. Then in 1986 a need arose in Sitía, Crete, where I had started my Christian career. I was delighted to accept this assignment to serve again with dear fellow believers whom I had known since my youth.

As the patriarch of my family, I am happy to see a total of almost 70 relatives serving Jehovah loyally. And the number continues to grow. Some have served as elders, ministerial servants, pioneers, Bethelites, and traveling overseers. For more than 58 years, my faith has been tested in a fiery furnace of affliction. I am now 93 years old, and as I look back, I have no regrets about serving God. He has given me the strength to respond to his loving invitation: “My son, do give your heart to me, and may those eyes of yours take pleasure in my own ways.”—Proverbs 23:26.

Questions From Readers

Why does the Bible say that a person should scream if threatened with rape?

Anyone who has not personally experienced the horror of being brutally assaulted by a rapist can never truly understand how it can shatter one's life. The experience is so terrifying for the victim that it may trouble her for the rest of her life.* A young Christian woman who was attacked by a rapist some years ago relates: “Words cannot express the sheer terror I felt that night or the trauma I’ve had to overcome since.” Understandably, many prefer not even to think about this frightening subject. Yet, the threat of rape is a reality in this wicked world.

* Although this article speaks about female victims, the principles discussed also apply to males who are threatened with rape.

The Bible does not shy from recounting some cases of rape and attempted rape that occurred in the past. (Genesis 19:4-11; 34:1-7; 2 Samuel 13:1-14) But it also offers counsel on what one should do when threatened with rape. What the Law says on the matter is found at Deuteronomy 22:23-27. This covers two situations. In the first case, a man found a young woman in a city and lay down with her. Even so, the woman did not scream or cry for help. Consequently, it was determined that she was guilty “for the reason that she did not scream in the city.” If she had cried out, people nearby might have been able to come to her rescue. In the second instance, a man found a young woman in the countryside, where he “grabbed hold of her and lay down with her.” In defense, the woman

"screamed, but there was no one to rescue her." Unlike the woman in the first instance, this woman clearly did not give in to the actions of the attacker. She actively resisted him, crying for help, but she was overpowered. Her screaming proved that she was an unwilling victim; she was not guilty of wrongdoing.

Although Christians today are not under the Mosaic Law, the principles mentioned therein provide them with guidance. The above account underscores the importance of resisting and screaming for help. Screaming when threatened with rape is still viewed as a practical course. One expert on crime prevention stated: "If a woman is attacked, her best weapon is still her lungs." A woman's screaming may attract others, who can then assist her, or it may startle an attacker and make him leave. A young Christian woman who was attacked by a rapist stated: "I screamed with all my might, and he backed off. When he came toward me again, I screamed and ran. In the past I had often thought, 'How can screaming help me when some big man grabs me with only one thing on his mind?' But I've learned that it works!"

Even in the sad case where a woman is overpowered and raped, her struggle and screaming for help is not in vain. On the contrary, it establishes that she did all she possibly could to resist her attacker. (Deuteronomy 22:26) Despite going through this ordeal, she can still have an undefiled conscience, self-respect, and the assurance that she is clean in God's eyes. The horrifying experience might leave her with emotional wounds, but knowing that she did all she could to resist the attack will greatly contribute to her gradual healing.

In understanding the application of Deuteronomy 22:23-27, we must realize that this brief account does not cover all possible situations. For example, it does not comment on the situation where the attacked woman cannot scream because she is mute, unconscious, or paralyzed with fear or is forcibly prevented from screaming by a hand or tape over her mouth. However, since Jehovah is able to weigh all factors, including motives, he deals with under-

standing and justice in such cases, for "all his ways are justice." (Deuteronomy 32:4) He is aware of what actually took place and of the efforts the victim put forth to fight off her attacker. Therefore, a victim who was unable to scream but otherwise did all she could under the circumstances can leave matters in Jehovah's hands.—Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7.

Even so, some Christian women who have been attacked and violated are incessantly pained by feelings of guilt. In hindsight, they feel that they should have done more to prevent the incident from happening. However, instead of blaming themselves, such victims can pray to Jehovah, ask for his help, and have confidence in his abundant loving-kindness.—Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:5.

Hence, Christian women who are presently coping with emotional wounds resulting from an encounter with a rapist can be confident that Jehovah fully understands the painful feelings they are dealing with. God's Word assures them: "Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves." (Psalm 34:18) Further help to cope with their trauma can come from accepting the sincere understanding and gentle support of fellow believers in the Christian congregation. (Job 29:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:14) Moreover, the victims' own efforts to concentrate on positive thoughts will help them to experience "the peace of God that excels all thought."—Philippians 4:6-9.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Jehovah—A God Worth
Knowing

Why Observe the Lord's
Evening Meal?

Do Not Leave Your
Child's Heart to Chance!

Sincerity

Desirable, but Is It Enough?

S SINCERITY really desirable in our daily life? A dictionary defines "sincerity" as "freedom from pretence or hypocrisy; honesty; straightforwardness; genuineness." Clearly, this quality is beneficial in promoting good relationships with others. The apostle Paul admonished: "Be obedient in everything to those who are your masters in a fleshly sense, not with acts of eye-service, as men pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, with fear of Jehovah." (Colossians 3:22) Who would not appreciate having such a sincere person working for him? Today, sincere people may have a better chance of finding and keeping their jobs.

What makes sincerity most desirable, however, is the way it affects our relationship with God. The ancient Israelites enjoyed God's blessing when they carefully observed the laws and the festivals. While discussing congregational cleanliness, Paul urged Christians: "Let us keep the festival, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of badness and wickedness, but with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:8) For our worship to be acceptable

It Is It Enough?

The builders and the passengers of the *Titanic* might sincerely have believed that the ocean liner was unsinkable. On its maiden voyage in 1912, however, it struck an iceberg and 1,517 people lost their lives. Certain first-century Jews might sincerely have believed in their way of worshiping God, but their zeal was "not according to accurate knowledge." (Romans 10:2) For us to be acceptable to God, our sincere beliefs must be based on accurate information. Jehovah's Witnesses in your community will be happy to assist you in examining what is involved in serving God with sincerity and truth.



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