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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



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DECEMBER 25, 2017–JANUARY 28, 2018



COVER IMAGE:

NICARAGUA

Two Christian sisters share the Bible's message with a merchant in the town of Tipitapa

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

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Make a Joyful Sound!

“It is good to sing praises to our God.”—Ps. 147:1.

A POPULAR lyricist once said: “Words make you think thoughts. Music makes you feel a feeling. But a song makes you feel a thought.” What better thoughts could we “feel” than those that express praise and love for our heavenly Father, Jehovah? It is no wonder that singing is a prominent aspect of pure worship, whether we are alone when we sing or we are with the congregation of God’s people.

² How, though, do you feel about singing aloud with the congregation? Do you find it embarrassing? In some cultures, men may feel uncomfortable singing in public. This view can affect the whole congregation, especially if those taking the lead find reasons to hold back or to engage in other activities while the rest of the congregation is singing.—Ps. 30:12.

³ If we truly consider singing as part of our worship, we certainly will not want to walk out on or be absent from that part of the meeting program. Thus, each one of us should ask himself: ‘How do I view the singing at our meetings for worship? How can I overcome any apprehension that may hold

1. What does singing enable us to do?

2, 3. (a) How might some feel about singing aloud with the congregation? (b) What questions will we consider?

SONGS: 10, 2

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What role does singing play in true worship?

How can you overcome obstacles and sing praises to Jehovah with feeling?

What improvements have been made in the new songbook, and how can you make the best use of it?

me back from singing out joyfully? And what can I do to express fully the feeling of the songs we sing?"

SINGING—AN INTEGRAL PART OF TRUE WORSHIP

⁴ Faithful worshippers of Jehovah have long used music as a way to praise Jehovah. It is noteworthy that when the ancient Israelites were faithfully serving Jehovah, singing was prominent in their worship. For example, in preparation for service at the temple, King David organized 4,000 Levites to provide music of praise. Among these, 288 were "trained in song to Jehovah, all experts."—1 Chron. 23:5; 25:7.

⁵ At the inauguration of the temple, music and singing played a prominent role. The account tells us: "At the moment when the trumpeters and the singers were praising and thanking Jehovah in unison, and as the sound ascended from the trumpets, the cymbals, and the other musical instruments as they were praising Jehovah, . . . the glory of Jehovah filled the house of the true God." What a faith-strengthening occasion that must have been!—2 Chron. 5:13, 14; 7:6.

⁶ When Nehemiah led the faithful Israelites in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, he also organized the Levite singers with full instrumental accompaniment. When the rebuilt walls were dedicated, the special music presentation contributed greatly to the joy of the occasion. This time, there were "two large thanksgiving choirs." Walking in opposite di-

rections, the choirs met on the wall close to the temple area to create a sound that could be heard from far away. (Neh. 12:27, 28, 31, 38, 40, 43) Jehovah was no doubt pleased to hear his worshippers enthusiastically praising him in song.

⁷ With the establishment of the Christian congregation, music continued to be a prominent feature of true worship. On the most important night in human history, Jesus included the singing of songs after the institution of the Lord's Evening Meal.—**Read Matthew 26:30.**

⁸ First-century Christians set a pattern of praising God together in song. Even though they often met in private homes, the modest surroundings for worship did not diminish their zeal for singing to Jehovah. Under inspiration, the apostle Paul directed his Christian brothers: "Keep on teaching and encouraging one another with psalms, praises to God, spiritual songs sung with gratitude, singing in your hearts to Jehovah." (Col. 3:16) The songs in our songbook are truly "spiritual songs [to be] sung with gratitude." They are a part of the spiritual food provided by "the faithful and discreet slave."—Matt. 24:45.

OVERCOMING APPREHENSION ABOUT SINGING

⁹ What if singing is not customary in your family, culture, or environment?

7. How did Jesus emphasize the need for singing in Christian worship?

8. How did the first-century Christians set a pattern of singing in worship?

9. (a) What might prevent some from singing out joyfully at our meetings and assemblies? (b) How should we sing praises to Jehovah, and who should take the lead? (See opening picture.)

4, 5. How extensive were the arrangements for singing in worship in ancient Israel?

6. Describe the special presentation of singing during Nehemiah's rule as governor in Jerusalem.

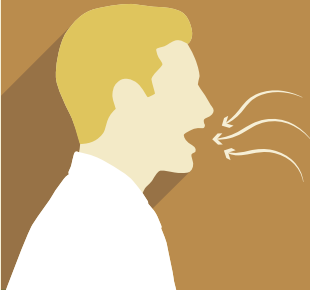
HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SINGING

(See paragraphs 11-14)

Use good posture



Take a deep breath



Open your mouth and throat wide



Sing out



With the availability of modern technology, you may enjoy listening to professional singers. Yet, you may feel embarrassed or disappointed when comparing your voice with productions from the entertainment world. That, however, should not interfere with your responsibility to sing praises to Jehovah. Rather, hold your songbook up high, lift your head, and sing with heartfelt expression! (Ezra 3:11; **read Psalm 147:1.**) Today, in many Kingdom Halls, the words of the songs are shown on screens, which helps us to sing out. It is also of interest that the singing of Kingdom songs has been made part of the Kingdom Ministry School curriculum for elders. This emphasizes the need for elders to take the lead in congregation singing.

¹⁰ One factor that keeps many from

10. What should we remember if fear inhibits us from singing out?

singing with a full voice is fear. It may be fear of standing out or of possibly sounding unpleasant to others. However, we should keep in mind that when we speak, “we all stumble many times.” (Jas. 3:2) Yet, that does not stop us from speaking. So why should we let our imperfect singing voices stop us from praising Jehovah in song?

¹¹ Perhaps we are apprehensive about singing because we are unsure of *how* to sing. Yet, we can improve our singing by applying some basic suggestions.*

¹² You can learn to sing with power and volume by *breathing* properly. Much as electricity powers a light bulb, breathing energizes your voice when you speak or

* For more instruction on improving the singing voice, see the December 2014 monthly program on JW Broadcasting (video category FROM OUR STUDIO).

11, 12. What are some suggestions for improving our singing?

sing. You should sing as loud as you speak or even louder than that. (See the suggestions found in *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*, pages 181 to 184, under the subheading “Properly Control Your Air Supply.”) In fact, within the context of singing praises, the Scriptures sometimes direct Jehovah’s worshippers to “shout joyfully.” —Ps. 33:1-3.

¹³ During family worship or even on your own, try the following: Choose one of your favorite songs from our songbook. Read the lyrics out loud in a strong, confident voice. Next, using the same volume, say all the words from a single phrase of the song *in one breath*. Then sing the phrase, using the same vibrant voice. (Isa. 24:14) Your singing voice will become fuller, and that is a good thing. Do not let it scare you or embarrass you!

13. Explain how we can increase our confidence in our singing.

¹⁴ You will not produce a full singing voice unless you make space in your mouth. So another suggestion is to open your mouth wider than you do for normal speaking. What should you do if you feel that you have a weak voice or perhaps a voice that is too high-pitched? You can find practical suggestions regarding these problems in *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*, page 184, in the box “Overcoming Specific Problems.”

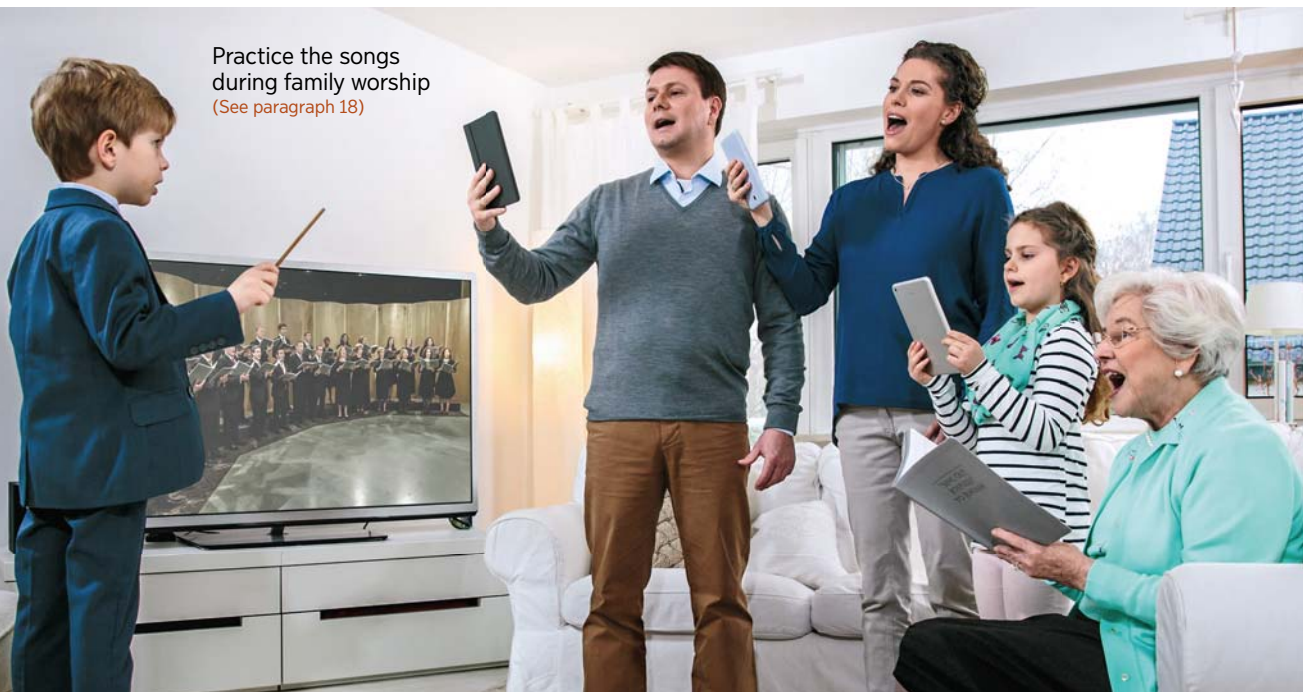
SING PRAISES FROM THE HEART

¹⁵ There was excitement at the 2016 annual meeting of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania when Brother Stephen Lett of the

14. (a) How can opening our mouth wider help our singing? (See the box “How to Improve Your Singing.”) (b) What suggestions for overcoming voice problems do you find practical?

15. (a) What announcement was made at the 2016 annual meeting? (b) What are some of the objectives of the new songbook?

Practice the songs during family worship
(See paragraph 18)



Governing Body announced that a new songbook, entitled “*Sing Out Joyfully*” to *Jehovah*, would soon be available for use at the meetings. Brother Lett explained that one objective of the revision was to bring the songs into harmony with the revised *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. This required removing or revising lyrics that used expressions no longer found in the *New World Translation* as a result of the 2013 revision. Further, new songs about our preaching work and songs that express our appreciation for the ransom have been included. Also, because singing is an integral part of our worship, the Governing Body wanted to produce a high-quality book that matches the cover of the revised *New World Translation*.

¹⁶ To make “*Sing Out Joyfully*” to *Jehovah* easier to use, the songs are arranged by subject matter. For example, the first 12 songs relate to *Jehovah*, the next 8 songs are about Jesus and the ransom, and so on. There is a subject index that will be helpful, for instance, when choosing a song for a public talk.

¹⁷ To help everyone to sing from the heart, some lyrics have been revised to improve clarity of thought and to remove words that are no longer in common use. For example, the word “shall” is not widely used today, so it has been replaced. Similarly, the title “Long-Suffering” has been changed to “Exercise Patience,” and the lyrics have been adjusted accordingly. The change of the title “Guard Your Heart” to “We Guard Our Hearts” was most considerate. Why? In the audience at our meetings, assemblies, and conventions are

16, 17. What refinements were made in the new songbook?

many new ones, interested ones, young ones, and sisters who by singing the words would be put in the awkward position of telling others what to do. So the title and the lyrics were modified.

¹⁸ Many of the songs from “*Sing Out Joyfully*” to *Jehovah* are in the form of a prayer. With these songs, you can express your personal feelings to *Jehovah*. Other songs will help “to incite [us] to love and fine works.” (Heb. 10:24) Surely we want to become familiar with the melodies, rhythms, and lyrics of our songs. You can do so by listening to the vocal renditions available on jw.org. By practicing the songs at home, you can learn to sing them with confidence and heartfelt expression.*

¹⁹ Remember that singing is an important feature of our worship. It is a powerful way to show our love and appreciation for *Jehovah*. **(Read Isaiah 12:5.)** When you sing out joyfully, you will also encourage others to sing with confidence. Indeed, all in the congregation—young, old, and newly interested ones—can join in this form of direct worship of *Jehovah*. So do not hold back in expressing yourself in song. Instead, obey the clear direction from the inspired psalmist: “Sing to *Jehovah*!” Yes, make a joyful sound!—Ps. 96:1.

* To help us get into the spirit of singing, each of the convention and assembly program sessions opens with a ten-minute music presentation. These orchestral arrangements are composed in such a way that they will prepare our heart and mind for the program to follow. Therefore, we are encouraged to be in our seats from the start and to listen attentively to these music programs.

18. Why should we become familiar with the songs in our new songbook? (See footnote.)

19. How can all in the congregation directly share in worshipping *Jehovah*?



Are You Taking Refuge in Jehovah?

“Jehovah is redeeming the life of his servants; none of those taking refuge in him will be found guilty.”—PS. 34:22.

SONGS: 8, 54

WHAT DOES THE ARRANGEMENT OF CITIES OF REFUGE TEACH YOU ABOUT . . .

the role of the elders in helping a person recover from a serious sin?

the need to take decisive action to benefit from God's mercy?

the completeness of Jehovah's forgiveness?

“MISERABLE man that I am!” (Rom. 7:24) Many of God's faithful servants have echoed those words of the apostle Paul. We all suffer from inherited sin, and when our actions do not reflect our keen desire to please Jehovah, we may feel miserable. Some Christians who have committed a serious sin have even felt that they are beyond God's forgiveness.

² Nevertheless, the Scriptures assure us that those who take refuge in Jehovah do not need to feel overwhelmed by guilt. **(Read Psalm 34:22.)** What does taking refuge in Jehovah involve? What steps must we take in order to receive Jehovah's mercy and forgiveness? We learn the answers to those questions by considering the arrangement of cities of refuge in ancient Israel. True, that arrangement was instituted under the Law covenant, which was replaced at Pentecost 33 C.E. Remember, though, that the Law came from Jehovah. So from

1. Because of sin, what feelings are common among God's faithful servants?
2. (a) How does Psalm 34:22 indicate that God's servants need not be overwhelmed by guilt? (b) What will this article consider? (See the box “Lessons or Antitypes?”)

the arrangement of the cities of refuge, we learn Jehovah's view of sin, sinners, and repentance. First, let us get an overview of the purpose and function of these cities.

“SELECT FOR YOURSELVES THE CITIES OF REFUGE”

³ Jehovah took seriously all cases of bloodshed in ancient Israel. Willful murderers were put to death by the victim's nearest male relative, known as “the avenger of blood.” (Num. 35:19) This act atoned for the innocent human blood that had been spilled. Swift execution protected the Promised Land from becoming defiled, for Jehovah commanded: “You must not pollute the land in which you live, for [the shedding of human] blood pollutes the land.”—Num. 35:33, 34.

⁴ How, though, did the Israelites handle cases of accidental bloodshed? Although his deed was accidental, an unintentional manslayer was still guilty of shedding innocent blood. (Gen. 9:5) Mercifully, however, he was allowed to flee from the avenger of blood to one of the six cities of refuge. There, he could find protection. The unintentional manslayer had to remain in the city of refuge until the high priest's death.—Num. 35:15, 28.

⁵ Designating these cities as cities of refuge was not a human idea. Jehovah himself commanded Joshua: “Tell the Israelites, ‘Select for yourselves the cities of refuge.’” The cities were given “a sa-

cred status.” (Josh. 20:1, 2, 7, 8) Since Jehovah was directly involved in setting these cities apart for special use, we might ask: How does this arrangement help us to have a clearer view of Jehovah's mercy? And what does it teach us about how we can take refuge in him today?

“HE MUST . . . PRESENT HIS CASE IN THE HEARING OF THE ELDERS”

⁶ After he accidentally killed someone, a fugitive first had to “present his case in the hearing of the elders” at the gate of the city of refuge to which he had fled. He was to be received hospitably. (Josh. 20:4) Some time later, he was sent back to the elders of the city where the killing had occurred, and those elders judged the case. **(Read Numbers 35:24, 25.)** Only after they had declared the killing accidental would the fugitive be returned to the city of refuge.

⁷ Why were the elders involved? They were to keep the congregation of Israel clean and to help the unintentional manslayer to benefit from Jehovah's mercy. One Bible scholar wrote that if the fugitive neglected to approach the elders, “it was at his peril.” He added: “His blood was on his own head, because he did not make use of the security God had provided for him.” Help was available to the unintentional manslayer, but he had to seek out and accept that help. If he did not seek refuge in one of the cities Jehovah had set aside, the closest relative of the person he had killed was free to put him to death.

3. How did the Israelites handle cases of willful murder?

4. How were cases of accidental bloodshed handled in Israel?

5. How can the arrangement of the cities of refuge help us to understand Jehovah better?

6, 7. (a) Describe the role of the elders in judging an unintentional manslayer. (See opening picture.) (b) Why was it wise for a fugitive to approach the elders?

⁸ Today, a Christian guilty of serious sin needs to seek the help of congregation elders to recover. Why is this so important? First, the arrangement for elders to handle cases of serious sin comes from Jehovah, as outlined in his Word. (Jas. 5:14-16) Second, this arrangement fortifies repentant wrongdoers to remain in God's care and to avoid a pattern of sin. (Gal. 6:1; Heb. 12:11) Third, elders are commissioned and trained to reassure repentant sinners, helping to ease their pain and guilt. Jehovah calls these older men "a refuge from the rainstorm." (Isa. 32:1, 2, fn.) Would you not agree that this arrangement is an expression of God's mercy?

⁹ Many of God's servants have discovered the relief that comes from seeking and receiving help from the elders. A brother named Daniel, for example, committed a serious sin, but for several months he hesitated to approach the el-

8, 9. Why should a Christian guilty of serious sin approach the elders for help?

ders. "After so much time had gone by," he admits, "I thought that there wasn't anything the elders could do for me anymore. Still, I was always looking over my shoulder, waiting for the consequences of my actions. And when I prayed to Jehovah, I felt that I had to preface everything with an apology for what I had done." Finally, Daniel sought the help of the elders. Looking back, he says: "Sure, I was scared to approach them. But afterward, it seemed as if someone had lifted a huge weight off my shoulders. Now, I feel that I can approach Jehovah without anything being in the way." Today, Daniel has a clean conscience, and he was recently appointed as a ministerial servant.

"HE MUST FLEE TO ONE OF THESE CITIES"

¹⁰ An unintentional manslayer had to take action to receive mercy. He had to *flee* to the nearest city of refuge. **(Read**

10. To receive mercy, what decisive action did an unintentional manslayer have to take?

Lessons or Antitypes?

Beginning in the late 19th century, *The Watch Tower* drew attention to the prophetic significance of the cities of refuge. "This feature of the typical Mosaic law strongly foreshadowed the refuge which the sinner may find in Christ," stated the September 1, 1895, issue. "Seeking refuge in him by faith, there is

protection." A century later, *The Watchtower* identified the antitypical city of refuge as "God's provision for protecting us from death for violating his commandment about the sanctity of blood."

However, the March 15, 2015, issue of *The Watchtower* explained why our recent publications seldom mention prophetic types and antitypes: "Where the Scriptures teach that an individual, an event, or an ob-

ject is typical of something else, we accept it as such. Otherwise, we ought to be reluctant to assign an antitypical application to a certain person or account if there is no specific Scriptural basis for doing so." Because the Scriptures are silent regarding any antitypical significance of the cities of refuge, this article and the next one emphasize instead the *lessons* Christians can learn from this arrangement.

Joshua 20:4.) We cannot imagine the fugitive being indifferent; his life depended on his reaching that city as soon as possible and remaining there! This meant sacrifice on his part. He had to leave behind his previous employment, the comforts of home, and the freedom to travel—until the death of the high priest.* (Num. 35:25) But such inconveniences were worth the effort. If he were to leave the city, the fugitive would show a callous indifference toward the lifeblood he had shed, and his own life would be in danger.

¹¹ To benefit from God's mercy, repentant wrongdoers today must likewise take action. We must completely abandon the sinful course, fleeing not only from serious sin but also from the lesser sins that often lead to gross wrongdoing. Under inspiration, the apostle Paul described the actions of repentant Christians in Corinth. He wrote: "What a great earnestness your being saddened in a godly way produced in you, yes, clearing of yourselves, yes, indignation, yes, fear, yes, earnest desire, yes, zeal, yes, righting of the wrong!" (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) Earnest actions to abandon a sinful course show Jehovah that we are not complacent, that we have not presumed on his mercy.

¹² What might a Christian need to give up in order to continue to receive divine mercy? He must be prepared to give up even what is dear to him if it would put him in danger of falling into sin. (Matt.

* According to Jewish reference works, the unintentional manslayer's immediate family evidently joined him in the city of refuge.

11. What actions of a repentant Christian show that he has not taken God's mercy for granted?

12. A Christian may need to give up what in order to continue to receive divine mercy?

18:8, 9) If certain friends influence you to do things that displease Jehovah, will you cut off association with them? If you struggle to be moderate in your use of alcoholic beverages, are you willing to steer clear of situations that might tempt you to overdrink? If you battle sexually immoral desires, are you avoiding any movies, websites, or activities that may trigger unclean thoughts? Remember, any sacrifice we make to keep our integrity to Jehovah is worth it. Nothing stings more than feeling abandoned by him. At the same time, nothing is more satisfying than feeling his "everlasting loyal love."—Isa. 54:7, 8.

"THEY WILL SERVE AS A REFUGE FOR YOU"

¹³ Once inside a city of refuge, the fugitive was safe. Regarding those cities, Jehovah said: "They will serve as a refuge for you." (Josh. 20:2, 3) Jehovah did not require the manslayer to be judged again for the same case; nor was the avenger of blood permitted to enter the city and take the fugitive's life. The fugitive thus never had to fear reprisal. While in the city, he was safe and secure under Jehovah's protection. This was not a *prison* of refuge. The city offered him an opportunity to work, to help others, and to serve Jehovah in peace. Yes, a happy and fulfilling life was possible!

¹⁴ Some of God's people who sinned grievously but who repented have felt "imprisoned" by their guilt, even feeling that Jehovah will forever view them as tainted by gross wrongdoing. If you feel that way, please be assured that when

13. Explain why a fugitive could feel safe, secure, and happy within the city of refuge.

14. What confidence can a repentant Christian have?



Be confident in Jehovah's forgiveness
(See paragraphs 14-16)

Jehovah forgives you, you can feel secure in his mercy! Daniel, quoted earlier, found this to be true. After the elders had corrected him and helped him to regain a clear conscience, he said: "I felt that I could breathe again. After the matter was handled properly, I didn't have to feel guilty anymore. Once the sin is gone, it's gone. As Jehovah said, he takes your burdens away and puts them far away from you. You will never have to see them again." Once inside the city of refuge, a fugitive no longer needed to look over his shoulder for the avenger of blood. Similarly, once Jehovah has forgiven our sin, we do not need to fear that he is looking for a reason to bring up that sin again or to judge us for it.—**Read Psalm 103:8-12.**

¹⁵ In fact, we have even greater reason than the Israelites had for confidence in Jehovah's mercy. After Paul expressed his misery for failing to obey Jehovah

15, 16. How can Jesus' role as Ransomer and High Priest strengthen your confidence in God's mercy?

perfectly, he exclaimed: "Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7: 25) Yes, despite his struggle with sin and his past wrongdoing—for which he had repented—Paul was confident in God's forgiveness through Jesus. As our Ransomer, Jesus cleanses our consciences and gives us inner peace. (Heb. 9:13, 14) As our High Priest, "he is able also to save completely those who are approaching God through him, because he is always alive to plead for them." (Heb. 7:24, 25) If the role of the high priest reassured the Israelites that their sins would be forgiven, how much more so should the services of our High Priest, Jesus, reassure us that "we may receive mercy and find undeserved kindness to help us at the right time."—Heb. 4:15, 16.

¹⁶ To take refuge in Jehovah, then, exercise faith in Jesus' sacrifice. Do not simply acknowledge the ransom's value in helping vast numbers of people. Rather, have faith that the ransom applies to *you*. (Gal. 2:20, 21) Have faith that the ransom is the basis for forgiving *your* sins. Have faith that the ransom offers *you* the hope of eternal life. Jesus' sacrifice is Jehovah's gift to *you*.

¹⁷ The cities of refuge are a reflection of Jehovah's mercy. Through this arrangement, God not only emphasized the sacredness of life but also illustrated how the elders assist us, what true repentance involves, and why we can be completely confident of Jehovah's forgiveness. Are you taking refuge in Jehovah? There is no safer place to be! (Ps. 91:1, 2) In the next article, we will see how the cities of refuge can help us to imitate Jehovah's superlative example of justice and mercy.

17. Why do you want to take refuge in Jehovah?



Imitate Jehovah's Justice and Mercy

“Judge with true justice, and deal with one another in loyal love and mercy.”—ZECH. 7:9.

JESUS loved the Mosaic Law. And no wonder! That Law came from the most important Person in Jesus' life—his Father, Jehovah. Jesus' deep affection for the law of God was prophetically expressed at Psalm 40:8: “To do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is deep within me.” By word and deed, Jesus affirmed that God's Law was perfect, beneficial, and sure to be fulfilled.—Matt. 5:17-19.

² How pained Jesus must have been, then, when he saw the scribes and Pharisees misrepresent his Father's Law! They meticulously obeyed some of its smallest details, for Jesus acknowledged: “You give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cumin.” So, what was the problem? He added: “But you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness.” (Matt. 23:23) Unlike those self-righteous Pharisees, Jesus grasped the spirit behind the Law, the divine qualities reflected in each commandment.

1, 2. (a) How did Jesus feel about God's Law? (b) How did the scribes and Pharisees misrepresent the Law?

SONGS: 125, 88

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

How may we imitate Jehovah's mercy when others need our forgiveness?

How do we show that we share Jehovah's view of life?

How should elders reflect divine justice when judging cases of wrongdoing?

Cities of refuge in Israel had:

- Convenient locations (1)
- Well-maintained roads (2)



³ As Christians, we are not under the Law covenant. (Rom. 7:6) Yet, Jehovah preserved that Law for us in his Word, the Bible. He wants us, not to obsess over the details of the Law, but to discern and apply its “weightier matters,” the lofty principles that underpin its commandments. For example, what principles might we discern in the arrangement of cities of refuge? The preceding article outlined lessons learned from the steps taken by the *fugitive*. But from the cities of refuge, we also learn about *Jehovah* and how we may reflect his qualities. Therefore, this article will answer three questions: How do the cities of refuge reveal Jehovah’s mercy? What do they teach us about his view of life? How do they reflect his perfect justice? In each case, look for ways that you can imitate your heavenly Father.—**Read Ephesians 5:1.**

“CITIES CONVENIENT FOR YOURSELVES” —AN EXPRESSION OF MERCY

⁴ The six cities of refuge were easy to access. Jehovah commanded Isra-

3. What will this article consider?

4, 5. (a) How and why were the cities of refuge made easily accessible? (b) What does this teach us about Jehovah?

el to distribute the cities evenly on both sides of the Jordan River. Why? So that any fugitive could find refuge quickly and conveniently. (Num. 35:11-14) Roads leading to the cities of refuge were kept in good repair. (Deut. 19:3) According to Jewish tradition, guideposts were erected to direct fugitives to the cities. Since the cities of refuge were available, an unintentional manslayer was not forced to flee to a foreign land, where he might be tempted to take up false worship.

⁵ Think of it: Jehovah—the very One who had mandated capital punishment for willful murderers—gave unintentional manslaughterers ample opportunity to receive compassion and protection! “Every thing was made as plain, as simple, and as easy as possible,” wrote one commentator. “Such was God’s gracious way.” Jehovah is not a heartless judge who is eager to punish his servants. Rather, he is “rich in mercy.”—Eph. 2:4.

⁶ The Pharisees, in contrast, were reluctant to extend mercy. For example, according to tradition, they were unwilling to forgive the same offense

6. How was the Pharisees’ attitude in contrast with God’s mercy?

more than three times. Jesus highlighted their attitude toward offenders by relating an illustration of a Pharisee who prayed: “O God, I thank you that I am not like everyone else—extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers—or even like this tax collector”—a tax collector who was humbly praying for God’s mercy. Why were the Pharisees so unwilling to show mercy? The Bible says that they “considered others as nothing.”—Luke 18:9-14.

⁷ Imitate Jehovah, not the Pharisees. Show compassion. **(Read Colossians 3:13.)** One way to do so is to make it easy for others to seek your forgiveness. (Luke 17:3, 4) Ask yourself: ‘Is my forgiveness within reach of people who have wronged me, even repeatedly? Am I *eager* to restore peace with someone who has offended me or who has hurt me?’

⁸ Forgiveness is really a test of humility. The Pharisees failed that test because they considered others to be inferior. As Christians, however, we must humbly “consider others superior” to us, as worthy of our forgiveness. (Phil. 2:3) Will you imitate Jehovah and pass the test of humility? Keep the “road” to your forgiveness open and in good repair. Be quick to extend mercy and slow to take offense.—Eccl. 7:8, 9.

RESPECT LIFE, AND “NO BLOODGUILT WILL COME UPON YOU”

⁹ A key purpose of the cities of refuge was to protect the Israelites from bloodguilt. (Deut. 19:10) Jehovah loves life, and he hates murderous “hands that

shed innocent blood.” (Prov. 6:16, 17) A just and holy God, he could not ignore even accidental bloodshed. True, an unintentional manslayer was shown mercy. Even so, he had to present his case before the elders, and if his deed was judged accidental, he had to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. This might mean spending the rest of his life there. These serious consequences impressed on all Israelites the sanctity of human life. To honor their Life-Giver, they needed to avoid any action or inaction that could endanger the life of their fellow man.

¹⁰ Unlike Jehovah, the scribes and Pharisees showed a careless disregard for life. How so? “You took away the key of knowledge,” Jesus told them. “You yourselves did not go in, and you hinder those going in!” (Luke 11:52) They were supposed to unlock the meaning of God’s Word and help others to

10. According to Jesus, how did the scribes and Pharisees show a careless disregard for life?

Is the “road” to your forgiveness open and in good repair? Be approachable
(See paragraphs 4-8)

7, 8. (a) When someone sins against you, how can you imitate Jehovah? (b) Why is forgiveness a test of humility?

9. How did Jehovah impress on the Israelites the sanctity of human life?



walk on the road to eternal life. Instead, they directed people away from “the Chief Agent of life,” Jesus, leading them toward a course that could end in eternal destruction. (Acts 3:15) Proud and selfish, the scribes and Pharisees cared little for the life and welfare of their fellow humans. How cruel and unmerciful!

¹¹ How can we avoid the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees and imitate Jehovah? We should respect and treasure the gift of life. The apostle Paul did that by giving a thorough witness. As a result, he could say: “I am clean from the blood of all men.” **(Read Acts 20:26, 27.)** Still, neither guilt nor duty moved Paul to preach. Rather, he loved people, and their lives were precious to him. (1 Cor. 9:19-23) We should likewise strive to cultivate a godly view of life. Jehovah “desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9) Do you? You may find that kindling a merciful attitude in your heart will motivate you to increase your zeal in the ministry and fill you with more joy as you do so.

¹² We also share Jehovah’s view of life by cultivating a proper attitude toward safety. We must drive and work safely, even when we are building, maintaining, or traveling to places of worship. Never put production, finances, or schedules ahead of safety and health. Our just God *always* does what is right and proper. We want to be like him. Elders in particular strive to be conscious of both their own safety and the safety of those working around them. (Prov. 22:3) If an elder reminds you of safety rules and standards,

therefore, accept his counsel. (Gal. 6:1) View life as Jehovah views it, and “no bloodguilt will come upon you.”

“JUDGE . . . IN HARMONY WITH THESE JUDGMENTS”

¹³ Jehovah commissioned Israelite elders to imitate his high standard of justice. First, the elders needed to establish the facts. Further, they had to weigh carefully a manslayer’s motive, attitude, and previous conduct when deciding whether to show mercy. To reflect divine justice, they had to determine whether the fugitive acted “out of hatred” and “with malicious intent.” **(Read Numbers 35:20-24.)** If the testimony of witnesses was considered, at least two witnesses had to substantiate a charge of intentional murder.—Num. 35:30.

¹⁴ Thus, after establishing the facts of the case, the elders had to look at the *person*, not just the action. They needed insight, the ability to look beyond the obvious and to see into a matter. Above all, they needed Jehovah’s holy spirit, which would enable them to reflect his insight, mercy, and justice.—Ex. 34:6, 7.

¹⁵ The Pharisees focused solely on what a sinner had done rather than on who a sinner was at heart. When Pharisees saw Jesus attending a banquet at Matthew’s home, they asked his disciples: “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus replied: “Healthy people do not need a physician, but those who are ill do. Go, then, and learn what this means: ‘I want mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners.”

11. (a) How did the apostle Paul show that he shared God’s view of life? (b) What will help us to share Paul’s attitude toward the ministry?

12. Why is safety important to God’s people?

13, 14. How could Israelite elders reflect Jehovah’s justice?

15. Contrast the way Jesus and the Pharisees viewed sinners.

(Matt. 9:9-13) Was Jesus excusing serious wrongdoing? Not at all. In fact, Jesus' principal message included the call to repent from sin. (Matt. 4:17) Nevertheless, Jesus insightfully noted that at least some of these "tax collectors and sinners" wanted to change. They were not at Matthew's home simply to eat. Rather, "there were many of them who were following [Jesus]." (Mark 2:15) Sadly, most Pharisees failed to see in such ones what Jesus saw. Unlike the just and merciful God they claimed to worship, the Pharisees labeled their fellow men sinners, condemning them as hopeless.

¹⁶ Elders today must be sure to imitate Jehovah, who "loves justice." (Ps. 37:28) First, they need to make "a thorough investigation and inquiry" to establish if wrong has been done. If it has, they will then handle the case according to Scriptural guidelines. (Deut. 13:12-14) When they serve on judicial committees, they must carefully determine whether a Christian guilty of serious sin is repentant. Repentance—or the lack of it—is not always obvious. It involves a person's viewpoint, disposition, and heart condition. (Rev. 3:3) A sinner must be repentant if he is to receive mercy.*

¹⁷ Unlike Jehovah and Jesus, elders cannot read hearts. If you are an elder, then, how can you meet the challenge of discerning heartfelt repentance? First, pray for wisdom and discernment. (1 Ki. 3:9) Second, consult God's Word and

* See "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower*, September 15, 2006, p. 30.

16. What does a judicial committee endeavor to discern?

17, 18. How can elders discern heartfelt repentance? (See opening picture.)

publications from the faithful slave to help you distinguish "sadness of the world" from "sadness in a godly way," genuine repentance. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) See how the Scriptures portray both repentant and unrepentant ones. How does the Bible describe their feelings, their attitude, and their conduct?

¹⁸ Finally, endeavor to see the whole person. Take into consideration a wrongdoer's background, his motives, and his limitations. Regarding the head of the Christian congregation, Jesus, the Bible prophesied: "He will not judge by what appears to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to what his ears hear. He will judge the lowly with fairness, and with uprightness he will give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth." (Isa. 11:3, 4) You elders are Jesus' under-shepherds, and he will help you to judge as he judges. (Matt. 18:18-20) Are we not grateful that we have caring elders who endeavor to do that? How we appreciate their tireless efforts to promote mercy and justice in our congregations!

¹⁹ The Mosaic Law reflected a "framework of the knowledge and of the truth" about Jehovah and his righteous principles. (Rom. 2:20) The cities of refuge, for example, teach elders how to "judge with true justice," and they teach all of us how to "deal with one another in loyal love and mercy." (Zech. 7:9) We are no longer under the Law. Yet, Jehovah does not change, and the qualities of justice and mercy are still important to him. What a privilege to worship a God in whose image we are made, whose qualities we can imitate, and in whom we can take refuge!

19. What lesson from the cities of refuge do you plan to apply?

“The Generous Person Will Be Blessed”



SACRIFICES have long been an important part of true worship. The Israelites offered animal sacrifices, and Christians have always been well-known for their “sacrifice of praise.” Yet, there are other sacrifices with which God is well-pleased. (Heb. 13:15, 16) These sacrifices bring both joy and blessings, as the following examples show.

Hannah, a faithful servant of old, dearly wanted a son but had been unable to bear children. In prayer, she vowed to Jehovah that if she would bear a son, she would “give him to Jehovah all the days of his life.” (1 Sam. 1:10, 11) In time, Hannah did become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son named Samuel. After Samuel was weaned, Hannah took him to the tabernacle, just as she had vowed. Jehovah blessed Hannah for her self-sacrificing spirit. She was privileged to have five more children, and Samuel became a prophet and a Bible writer.—1 Sam. 2:21.

Like Hannah and Samuel, Christians today have the privilege of using their lives in dedicated service to their Creator. Jesus promised that any sacrifices we make to worship Jehovah will be richly rewarded.—Mark 10:28-30.

In the first century, a Christian woman named Dorcas was well-known for her “good deeds and gifts of mercy”—sacrifices she made to help others. Sadly, however, “she fell sick and died,” bringing grief to the congregation. When the disciples heard that Peter was in the area, they urged him to come at once. Imagine their

joy when Peter came and raised Dorcas from the dead—the first recorded resurrection by an apostle! (Acts 9:36-41) God had not forgotten the sacrifices of Dorcas. (Heb. 6:10) Her record of generosity has been preserved in God’s Word as a fine example for us to imitate.

The apostle Paul likewise set an excellent example of one who gave generously of his time and attention. Writing to his Christian brothers in Corinth, Paul said: “For my part, I will most gladly spend and be completely spent for you.” (2 Cor. 12:15) Paul learned through experience that sacrificing oneself in behalf of others brings not only personal satisfaction but also—and more important—Jehovah’s blessing and approval.—Acts 20:24, 35.

Clearly, Jehovah is pleased when we use our time and energy to promote Kingdom interests and assist fellow believers. But are there other ways in which we can support the Kingdom-preaching work? Yes! In addition to our labors of love, we can honor God by way of our voluntary contributions. They are used to further the worldwide preaching work, which includes supporting missionaries and other special full-time servants. In addition, the preparation and translation of literature and videos, the assistance with disaster relief efforts, and the construction of new Kingdom Halls are all cared for by our voluntary contributions. We can be assured that “the generous person will be blessed.” Moreover, when we give our valuable things to Jehovah, we honor him.—Prov. 3:9; 22:9.

HOW SOME CHOOSE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLDWIDE WORK

As in the apostle Paul's day, many today "set something aside," or budget an amount of money, and place it in the congregation contribution box labeled "Worldwide Work." (1 Cor. 16:2) Each month, congregations forward these contributions to the office of Jehovah's Witnesses that serves their branch territory. It is also possible for you to send donations directly to a legal entity that is used by Jehovah's Witnesses in the country where you reside. To learn the name of the primary legal entity used by Jehovah's Witnesses in the country where you live, please contact the branch office. The address can be found on www.jw.org. Depending on local conditions, the types of donations that you can send directly may include:

OUTRIGHT DONATIONS

- Donations via electronic bank transfer, debit card, or credit card. In some branches this is also possible using jw.org or another designated website.
- Donations of cash, jewelry, or other valuable personal property. Include a letter indicating that the cash or the item is an outright donation.

CONDITIONAL DONATION ARRANGEMENT

- Donations of cash with the condition that it can be returned if needed by the donor.
- Include a letter stating that the donation is conditional.

CHARITABLE PLANNING

In addition to gifts of money and valuable personal property, there are other ways to benefit Kingdom service worldwide. These are listed below. Regardless of the method or methods you would like to use, please first contact the branch office that serves your branch territory to see which avenues are available. Since legal requirements and tax laws vary, it is important to consult qualified tax and legal advisers before choosing the best way to donate.

Insurance and Retirement Plans: A donation made by specifying an entity used by Jehovah's Witnesses as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy, individual retirement account, or a retirement/pension plan.

Bank Accounts: Bank accounts may be made payable on death to an entity used by Jehovah's Witnesses in accord with local bank requirements.

Stocks and Bonds: Stocks and bonds donated to an entity used by Jehovah's Witnesses as an outright gift or by means of a written agreement to transfer on death.

Real Estate: Salable real estate donated to an entity used by Jehovah's Witnesses, either by making an outright gift or, in the case of residential property, by reserving a life estate to the donor, who can continue to live in the residence during his or her lifetime.

Wills and Trusts: Property or money may be bequeathed to an entity used by Jehovah's Witnesses by means of a legally executed will or by specifying the entity as the beneficiary of a trust agreement. This arrangement may provide certain tax advantages.

As the term "charitable planning" implies, these types of donations typically require some planning on the part of the donor. To assist individuals desiring to benefit the worldwide work of Jehovah's Witnesses through some form of charitable giving, a brochure entitled *Charitable Planning to Benefit Kingdom Service Worldwide* has been prepared in English and Spanish. The brochure was written to provide information on a variety of ways that gifts may be made now or later, such as through a bequest at death. The information covered in this brochure may not apply fully to your situation because of tax laws or other laws in the country where you reside. By using such methods of charitable giving, many have helped to support our religious and humanitarian activities worldwide and maximize tax benefits. If available in the country where you reside, the brochure may be obtained by requesting a copy from the secretary of the local congregation.

For more information, select the link "Make a Donation to Our Worldwide Work" at the bottom of any page on jw.org, or contact the branch office.



Reject Worldly Thinking

“Look out that no one takes you captive by means of the philosophy and empty deception . . . of the world.”

—COL. 2:8.

SONGS: 38, 31

HOW DO YOU ANSWER?

What loving counsel did the apostle Paul give about worldly thinking?

What is an example of worldly thinking, and how can we reject it?

How has the information in this article helped you?

THE apostle Paul wrote his letter to Christians in Colossae evidently at the end of his first confinement in Rome, or about 60-61 C.E. He mentioned to them the importance of acquiring “spiritual comprehension.” (Col. 1:9) Paul further stated: “I am saying this so that no one may delude you with persuasive arguments. Look out that no one takes you captive by means of the philosophy and empty deception according to human tradition, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ.” (Col. 2:4, 8) Paul went on to explain why some popular ideas were wrong and why worldly thinking may be appealing to imperfect people. For example, it may make a person feel wise and superior to others. The letter was aimed at helping the brothers to reject worldly thinking and wrong practices.—Col. 2:16, 17, 23.

² Worldly thinking ignores or belittles Jehovah’s guidelines, and its influence could gradually weaken our faith. Today, we all are exposed to worldly thinking. It is promoted on televi-

1. What counsel did the apostle Paul write to fellow Christians? (See opening picture.)
2. Why will we consider examples of worldly thinking?

sion, on the Internet, at work, or at school. In this article, we will examine what we can do to prevent such thinking from corrupting our mind. We will consider five examples of worldly thinking and discuss how we can reject these ideas.

DO WE NEED TO BELIEVE IN GOD?

³ *“I can be a good person without believing in God.”* In many countries, it is not unusual to hear people say that they do not believe in God; they consider themselves to be nonreligious. They may not have examined the question of God’s existence carefully, but they are drawn to the idea of being free to do as they please. **(Read Psalm 10:4.)** Others may feel worldly-wise when they say, “I can have high principles without believing in God.”

⁴ Is the claim of unbelievers that there is no Creator based on logical reasoning? When looking to science to determine whether life was created, a person can easily get lost in a fog of information. But in reality, the answer is simple. If a building needs someone to construct it, how much more so do living things! Actually, the most basic living cells on earth are far more complex than any house because they can do what no house can do—reproduce. So these cells have a way to store and copy the information needed to replicate themselves. Where did the design for living cells come from? The Bible answers: “Every house is constructed by someone, but the one who constructed all things is God.”—Heb. 3:4.

3. What idea is appealing to many people, and why?

4. How could we reason with someone who claims that there is no Creator?

⁵ How can we reason about the notion that a person can determine what is good without believing in God? God’s Word acknowledges that unbelievers may have certain commendable principles. (Rom. 2:14, 15) For example, they may respect and love their parents. But how well-founded are the moral standards of someone who refuses to acknowledge our loving Creator as the One who sets the standards of right and wrong? (Isa. 33:22) Many thinking people today will admit that the deplorable conditions on earth confirm that man needs God’s help. **(Read Jeremiah 10:23.)** So we should not be tempted to think that someone could fully determine what is good without believing in God and adhering to his standards.—Ps. 146:3.

DO WE NEED RELIGION?

⁶ *“You can be happy without religion.”* This example of worldly thinking appeals to many people because they view religion as dull and irrelevant. Also, many religions turn people away from God by teaching hellfire, collecting tithes, or preaching politics. No wonder an increasing number of people feel that they can be happy without religion! Such individuals may say, “I am interested in spiritual matters, but I do not get involved in organized religion.”

⁷ Is it really true that one can be happy without religion? Certainly an individual can be happy without *false* religion, but a person cannot be truly happy unless he has a relationship with

5. What can we say about the notion that an individual can determine what is good without believing in God?

6. What view of religion do many people have?

7. How does true religion promote happiness?

Jehovah, who is described as “the happy God.” (1 Tim. 1:11) Everything God does benefits others. His servants are happy because they focus on helping others. (Acts 20:35) For example, consider how true worship promotes family happiness. True worship teaches us to honor and respect our spouse, to treat marriage vows as sacred, to avoid adultery, to raise respectful children, and to practice true love. As a result, such worship unites people in happy congregations and a happy worldwide brotherhood.—**Read Isaiah 65:13, 14.**

⁸ How can we analyze the worldly idea that one can be happy without serving God? Consider this question, What makes people happy? Some find satisfaction in a career, a sport, or a hobby. Others find satisfaction in caring for family or friends. All those things can bring pleasure, but our life has a higher purpose that brings lasting happiness. In contrast with animals, we can come to know our Creator and serve him faithfully. We have been created in such a way that we find happiness in doing so. (**Read Matthew 5:3.**) For example, true worshippers find delight and derive much encouragement from meeting together to worship Jehovah. (Ps. 133:1) They also enjoy a united brotherhood, a wholesome lifestyle, and a happy hope.

DO WE NEED MORAL STANDARDS?

⁹ “*Why condemn sex outside marriage?*” People may say to us: “Life is to be enjoyed. Why condemn having sex outside marriage?” The suggestion that a Chris-

8. How can we use Matthew 5:3 to reason on the question, What makes people happy?

9. (a) What idea about sex is common in this world? (b) Why does God’s Word forbid sex outside marriage?

tian should tolerate sexual immorality is wrong. Why? Because God’s Word forbids sexual immorality.* (**Read 1 Thesalonians 4:3-8.**) Jehovah has the right to make laws for us because he created us. The law of God that permits sexual relations only between a man and a woman who are married to each other is part of what defines the marriage arrangement. God gives us laws because he loves us. They benefit us. Families who obey them enjoy love, respect, and security. God does not tolerate willful disobedience to his law.—Heb. 13:4.

¹⁰ God’s Word teaches us how to keep far away from sexual immorality. An important way to do so is by controlling what we look at. Jesus stated: “Everyone who keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If, now, your right eye is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you.” (Matt. 5:28, 29) Therefore, a Christian will avoid looking at pornography or listening to music with immoral lyrics. The apostle Paul wrote to fellow Christians: “Deadens . . . your body members that are on the earth as respects sexual immorality.” (Col. 3:5) Further, we need to control what we think about and talk about.—Eph. 5:3-5.

* Many people do not realize that the passage found in some Bibles at John 7:53–8:11 is an addition that was not part of the original inspired writings. On the basis of this passage, some have claimed that only a person without sin could find someone guilty of adultery. But the law that God gave to the nation of Israel said: “If a man is found lying down with a woman who is the wife of another man, both of them must die together.”—Deut. 22:22.

10. How can a Christian keep far away from sexual immorality?



Lasting joy comes from helping people to benefit from God's wisdom
(See paragraphs 12, 13)

SHOULD WE PURSUE A SECULAR CAREER?

¹¹ *"Pursuing a career is the key to happiness."* Many people urge us to pursue a secular career as our goal in life. Such a career may promise status, authority, and wealth. Because many make pursuing a career their main goal in life, a Christian might adopt the same way of thinking.

¹² Is it true that succeeding in a secular career that offers power and prestige leads to lasting happiness? No. Remember that the craving to control others and the longing to be admired are the desires that enticed Satan, but he is angry, not happy. (Matt. 4:8, 9; Rev. 12:12) Compared to the lasting joy that comes from helping people to benefit from God's wisdom so that they can gain everlasting life, a secular career can provide only limited satisfaction. Moreover, the spirit of this world is intensely competitive. It pushes

11. Why can pursuing a secular career sound appealing?

12. Is succeeding in a career the key to happiness?

people to outdo one another, breeds jealousy, and in the end, proves to be "a chasing after the wind."—Eccl. 4:4.

¹³ True, we have to earn a living, and there is nothing wrong with choosing work we enjoy. But our secular employment should not be the main thing in our life. Jesus said: "No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other. You cannot slave for God and for Riches." (Matt. 6:24) When we focus first on serving Jehovah and teaching others his Word, we experience incomparable joy. The apostle Paul, for one, had that experience. Earlier in life, he had pursued a promising career in Judaism, but he found true happiness when he became a disciple-maker and witnessed how people responded to God's message and how it changed their life. (**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 19, 20.**) No other career offers satisfaction like that.

13. (a) How should we view secular pursuits? (b) According to Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, what gave him deep joy?

CAN WE SOLVE MANKIND'S PROBLEMS?

¹⁴ “Humans can solve their own problems.” This worldly idea may sound appealing to many people. Why? If it were true, it would mean that man does not need God’s guidance and that man can do as he pleases. Also, the idea that man can solve his own problems may sound convincing because—according to some studies—war, crime, disease, and poverty are all decreasing. One report states: “The reason humanity is getting better is because humans have decided to make the world a better place.” Does a comment like that indicate that man is coming to grips with the problems that have plagued him for so long? To answer, let us consider those problems more closely.

¹⁵ *Wars*: The two world wars took an estimated 60 million or more lives. Since the end of World War II, mankind has certainly not learned to avoid war. By 2015, the number of people displaced from their homes by war or persecution had grown to some 65 million. An estimated 12.4 million people were displaced during 2015 alone. *Crime*: Although certain types of crime have decreased in some places, other types, such as cyber-crime, domestic violence, and terrorism are increasing at an alarming rate. In addition, many people believe that global corruption has worsened. Mankind is not able to eliminate crime. *Disease*: Some diseases have been controlled. But a report published in 2013 noted that each year a staggering nine million people under the age of 60 die from heart disease, stroke, cancer, respiratory disease,

and diabetes. *Poverty*: According to the World Bank, the number of those suffering extreme poverty in Africa alone has grown from 280 million in 1990 to 330 million in 2012.

¹⁶ The present economic and political systems are powered by selfish forces. Clearly, such forces cannot eliminate war, crime, disease, and poverty—only God’s Kingdom can. Consider what Jehovah will do for mankind. *War*: God’s Kingdom will eliminate such deep-seated causes of war as selfishness, corruption, patriotism, false religion, and Satan himself. (Ps. 46:8, 9) *Crime*: God’s Kingdom is already teaching millions to love and trust one another as no other government can. (Isa. 11:9) *Disease*: Jehovah will bless his people with perfect health. (Isa. 35:5, 6) *Poverty*: Jehovah will eliminate it and will provide his people with spiritual and physical prosperity, a quality of life far more valuable than riches. —Ps. 72:12, 13.

“KNOW HOW YOU SHOULD ANSWER”

¹⁷ If you hear a worldly idea that seems to challenge your faith, research what God’s Word says on the subject and discuss the matter with an experienced fellow believer. Consider why the idea may sound appealing, why such thinking is faulty, and how you can refute it. Indeed, all of us can protect ourselves against worldly thinking by following the admonition that Paul gave to the congregation in Colossae: “Go on walking in wisdom toward those on the outside . . . Know how you should answer each person.”—Col. 4:5, 6.

14. Why may the idea that man can solve his own problems sound appealing?

15. What facts underline the gravity of mankind’s problems?

16. (a) Why can only God’s Kingdom solve mankind’s problems? (b) What Kingdom blessings are foretold by Isaiah and a psalmist?

17. How can you reject worldly thinking?



Let Nothing Deprive You of the Prize

“Let no man deprive you of the prize.”—COL. 2:18.

LIKE the apostle Paul, spirit-anointed Christians today have the precious prospect of receiving “the prize of the upward call of God.” (Phil. 3:14) They look forward to serving with Jesus Christ in his heavenly Kingdom and sharing with him in bringing mankind to perfection. (Rev. 20:6) What a wonderful goal such ones have been invited by God to pursue! The other sheep have a different hope. They look forward to gaining the prize of everlasting life on earth—and what a happy prospect that is!—2 Pet. 3:13.

² To help fellow anointed Christians to stay faithful and attain the prize, Paul urged them: “Keep your minds fixed on the things above.” (Col. 3:2) They were to keep in mind the precious hope of receiving their heavenly inheritance. (Col. 1:4, 5) Indeed, contemplating the blessings that Jehovah sets before his people helps all of God’s servants to keep their

1, 2. (a) God’s servants look forward to what prize? (b) What helps us to keep our eyes on the prize? (See opening picture.)

SONGS: 122, 139

HOW DO YOU ANSWER?

How can we protect ourselves against the enticement of immoral desires?

How can love and kindness protect us from being deprived of the prize?

How can we win the prize as a family?

eyes on the prize, whether they have the heavenly or the earthly hope.—1 Cor. 9:24.

³ Paul also alerted fellow Christians about dangers that could deprive them of the prize. For example, he wrote to the congregation in Colossae about false Christians who were trying to gain God's favor through works of the Law rather than through faith in Christ. (Col. 2:16-18) Paul also discussed dangers that exist down to this day and that can deprive us of the prize. For instance, he explained how to resist immoral desires, handle problems with fellow believers, and deal with family difficulties. His counsel on these matters is valuable for us today. Therefore, let us examine some of Paul's loving warnings found in his letter to the Colossians.

DEADEN IMMORAL DESIRES

⁴ After reminding his brothers of their marvelous hope, Paul wrote: "Deadened, therefore, your body members that are on the earth as respects sexual immorality, uncleanness, uncontrolled sexual passion, hurtful desire, and greediness." (Col. 3:5) Immoral desires can be very powerful and can deprive us of spiritual treasures. One brother who was swept away by immoral desires said after he returned to the congregation, "I was drawn by a force so powerful that I did not turn back until it was too late."

⁵ It is especially important to be on guard when we are confronted by cir-

3. Paul alerted fellow Christians about what dangers?

4. Why can immoral desires deprive us of the prize?

5. How can we protect ourselves in dangerous situations?

cumstances that could tempt us to compromise Jehovah's moral standards. For example, it is wise for a couple, right from the start of a courtship, to set clear limits for themselves about such matters as touching, kissing, or being alone together. (Prov. 22:3) Morally dangerous situations may also come up when a Christian is away from home on a business trip or when a Christian has to work with someone of the opposite sex. (Prov. 2:10-12, 16) If you find yourself in such a situation, identify yourself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, act in a respectable manner, and remember that flirting can have disastrous consequences. We may also find ourselves at greater risk if we are depressed and vulnerable. At such times, we may yearn for someone who makes us feel needed. We may even become so desperate for emotional support that we will accept attention from just about anyone. If that ever happens to you, turn to Jehovah and his people for help so as not to allow yourself to be deprived of the prize.—**Read Psalm 34:18; Proverbs 13:20.**

⁶ To deaden immoral desires, we need to reject immoral entertainment. Much of the entertainment industry today has the characteristics of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah. (Jude 7) Industry leaders promote their ideas on morals by presenting sexual immorality as normal behavior, free of painful consequences. We cannot let our guard down, passively accepting any entertainment that is offered. We need to select forms of entertainment that will not hinder us from keeping our eyes on the prize of life.—Prov. 4:23.

6. As to our choice of entertainment, what should we keep in mind?

**“CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH”
LOVE AND KINDNESS**

⁷ We all agree that being part of the Christian congregation is a blessing. The study of God’s Word at our meetings and the kind and loving support that we give one another help us to keep our eyes focused on the prize. Nevertheless, at times, misunderstandings may lead to some tension among members of the congregation. If we fail to resolve such problems, they could easily lead to feelings of resentment.—**Read 1 Peter 3: 8, 9.**

⁸ How can we prevent resentment from depriving us of the prize? Paul urged the Colossians: “As God’s chosen ones, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, humility, mildness, and patience. Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely even if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Just as Jehovah freely forgave you, you must also do the same. But besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union.”—Col. 3:12-14.

⁹ Love and kindness can help us to be forgiving toward one another. For example, if we feel hurt by the words or actions of a fellow Christian, we can try to recall occasions when we spoke or acted unkindly. Do we not appreciate the love and kindness of the brothers and sisters who overlooked our errors? (**Read Ecclesiastes 7:21, 22.**) Especially are we thankful for Christ’s kindness in gather-

ing true worshippers into unity. (Col. 3: 15) We all love the same God, preach the same message, and face many of the same challenges. By kindly and lovingly forgiving one another, we contribute to Christian unity and keep our eyes on the prize of life.

¹⁰ Warning examples in the Bible remind us that jealousy can deprive us of the prize. For instance, Cain became jealous of his brother Abel and killed him. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram became jealous of Moses and opposed him. Also, King Saul became jealous of David’s success and tried to kill him. No wonder God’s Word states: “Wherever there are jealousy and contentiousness, there will also be disorder and every vile thing.”—Jas. 3:16.

¹¹ If we cultivate love and kindness in our heart, we will not easily become jealous. God’s Word says: “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous.” (1 Cor. 13:4) To prevent jealousy from taking root in our heart, we must strive to see things from God’s standpoint, viewing our brothers and sisters as members of the same Christian body. This will help us to show fellow feeling, in harmony with the inspired counsel: “If a member is glorified, all the other members rejoice with it.” (1 Cor. 12:16-18, 26) Thus, rather than feel jealous, we will be happy when others receive blessings. Consider the example of King Saul’s son Jonathan. He was not jealous when David was appointed heir to the throne. Rather, he encouraged David. (1 Sam. 23:16-18) Could we be as kind and loving as Jonathan?

7. What problems might we face within the Christian congregation?

8, 9. (a) Having what qualities will help us to win the prize? (b) What can help us to preserve peace if a fellow Christian upsets us?

10, 11. (a) Why is jealousy dangerous? (b) How can we prevent jealousy from depriving us of our reward?

WIN THE PRIZE AS A FAMILY

¹² Applying Bible principles can bring peace and happiness to a family and help them to win the prize. What Scriptural counsel for families did Paul give to Christians in Colossae? He stated: “You wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as it is becoming in the Lord. You husbands, keep on loving your wives and do not be bitterly angry with them. You children, be obedient to your parents in everything, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so

12. Heeding what Scriptural counsel will help us to attain the prize as a family?

that they do not become downhearted.” (Col. 3:18-21) No doubt you will agree that applying Paul’s inspired counsel will still benefit husbands, wives, and children.

¹³ What if you are a wife and you feel that your unbelieving husband does not treat you properly? Would you improve the situation by arguing about his behavior? Even if you succeed in making him do what you want, will you win him over to the truth? Not likely. But if you show respect for your husband’s headship, you can contribute to peace in the

13. How could a Christian sister win over her unbelieving husband?

How can we prevent family difficulties from depriving us of the prize?

(See paragraphs 13-15)



family, you will praise Jehovah, and you may even win your husband over to true worship; thus you both may gain the prize.—**Read 1 Peter 3:1, 2.**

¹⁴ What if you are a husband and you feel that your unbelieving wife does not respect you? Would you move her to show you more respect if you were to shout at her to show her who is boss? Absolutely not! God expects you to exercise headship lovingly, in imitation of Jesus. (Eph. 5:23) Jesus exercises his headship over his congregation with loving patience. (Luke 9:46-48) By imitating Jesus' example, a husband may win his wife over to true worship.

¹⁵ Husbands are told: "Keep on loving your wives and do not be bitterly angry with them." (Col. 3:19) A loving husband honors his wife by listening to her opinions and by assuring her that he values what she says. (1 Pet. 3:7) Although he cannot always do as she asks, he often arrives at a more balanced decision by consulting her. (Prov. 15:22) A loving husband tries to gain his wife's respect by earning it rather than demanding it. A husband who loves his wife and children is more likely to have a family that happily serves Jehovah and wins the prize of life.

YOUTHS—LET NOTHING DEPRIVE YOU OF THE PRIZE!

¹⁶ What if you are a teenager and feel misunderstood and restricted by your Christian parents? Your frustra-

14. What should a Christian husband do if his unbelieving wife does not respect him?

15. How does a Christian man express his love for his wife?

16, 17. As a youth, how can you avoid becoming overly frustrated with your parents?

tion might even make you doubt that serving Jehovah is the best way of life. But if you allow frustration to make you give up serving Jehovah, you would soon discover that no one else cares for you more genuinely than your God-fearing parents and your congregation.

¹⁷ If your parents never corrected you, would you not wonder if they really cared about you? (Heb. 12:8) But perhaps it is the way your parents discipline you that upsets you. Rather than fret over the manner of discipline, try to recognize that there may be a reason for the way they act. So keep calm and do your best to avoid overreacting to criticism. God's Word says: "A man of knowledge restrains his words, and a discerning man will remain calm." (Prov. 17:27) Make it your goal to become a mature person who can take counsel calmly, benefiting from it without worrying excessively about how it was given. (Prov. 1:8) To have believing parents who truly love Jehovah is a blessing. They will surely want to help you to win the prize of life.

¹⁸ The prize before us—whether immortal life in heaven or everlasting life on a paradise earth—is marvelous to contemplate. It is a sure hope, one based on the promise of the Creator himself. Regarding the Paradise earth, God says: "The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah." (Isa. 11:9) Everyone then living on earth will be taught by God. That is surely a prize worth striving for. So keep your mind on what Jehovah has promised, and let nothing deprive you of the prize!

18. Why are you resolved to keep your eyes on the prize?



HOW CAN YOU ADJUST TO YOUR NEW CONGREGATION?

“I WAS nervous about moving here,” says Allen.* “I didn’t know if I would make friends or be accepted.” Allen is adapting to a new congregation nearly 900 miles (over 1,400 km) away from home.

If you have moved to a different congregation, you too may be apprehensive. What can help you to adjust? What can you do if the adjustment is harder than you expected? On the other hand, if you are not moving, how might you make the change easier for newcomers?

HOW CAN YOU ADJUST AND THRIVE?

Think of this example: When trees are relocated, they experience stress. As a tree is removed from the ground, most of its roots are usually cut off to make it easier to transport. Once transplanted, the tree must immediately start growing new roots. Similarly, moving to another congregation may have caused you to experience stress. In your previous congregation, you had grown “roots” as you developed cherished friendships and settled into a familiar spiritual routine. Now you must grow new roots in order to flourish in a new environment. What will help you to do so? Applying Scriptural principles. Let us consider some.

The person who regularly reads God’s Word is “like a tree planted by streams of water, a tree that produces fruit in its season, the foliage of which does not wither. And everything he does will succeed.”—Ps. 1:1-3.

Just as a tree must regularly draw from a water source to remain healthy, a Christian must regularly feed on God’s Word to remain spiritually strong. Therefore, continue to read the Bible daily and to attend congregation meetings regularly. Maintain your good habits of family worship and personal study. Whatever you needed spiritually in your previous location, you will need in your new one too.

“Whoever refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”—Prov. 11:25.

You will be invigorated and will adapt quicker when you share fully in the ministry. “What aided my wife and me the most was to auxiliary pioneer soon after we arrived in our new congregation,” says Kevin, a Christian elder. “We quickly got to know the brothers, the pioneers, and the territory.” Roger, who moved to an area over 1,000 miles (over 1,600 km) away from where he lived, says: “The best way to adapt to a new congregation is to go in field service as often as possible. Also, let the elders know that you are available to assist in any way, perhaps by cleaning the Kingdom Hall, substituting for a meeting part, or offering to give someone a ride to the meetings. When the brothers and sisters see someone new with a self-sacrificing spirit, they take you in.”

“Open your hearts wide.”—2 Cor. 6:13.

Widen out in your brotherly affection. After Melissa and her family moved to a new congregation, they concentrated on making new friends. “We mingled at the Kingdom Hall before and af-

* Some names have been changed.



Trees that are relocated experience stress, but when they are transplanted, they grow new roots

ter meetings,” she says. “That allowed time to converse beyond just saying a simple greeting.” This also helped the family to learn new names more quickly. In addition, they widened out by extending hospitality, which strengthened the new bonds of friendship. “We exchanged phone numbers,” she adds, “so we could be reached and included in spiritual and other activities.”

If you are overwhelmed by the thought of meeting new people, you can start in small ways. For example, smile—even if you do not feel like it at first. A smile will draw others to you. After all, “a cheerful glance makes the heart rejoice.” (Prov. 15:30, ftn.) “I am reserved by nature,” says Rachel, who moved far away from where she grew up. “Sometimes I have to force myself to talk to the brothers and sisters in my new congregation. I look for someone who is sitting down in the Kingdom Hall, not talking to anyone. That person may be just as shy as I am.” Why not set the goal to converse with someone new before or after every meeting?

On the other hand, you may be excited to meet new people for the first few weeks. But then the “newness” can wear off as time goes by. At that point, you may need to exert yourself to *continue* to make new friends.

GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO ADJUST

Some trees take longer than others to become firmly rooted in a new environment. Likewise, not everyone adapts to a new congregation at the same pace. If you moved some time ago but you

are still struggling to adjust, applying these Bible principles can help:

“Let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due time we will reap if we do not tire out.”—Gal. 6:9.

Allow *more* time to adjust than you originally expected. For example, many Gilead-trained missionaries stay in their foreign assignment for several years before going back to their country of origin for a visit. Doing so helps them to bond with the local brothers and to adjust to a different culture.

Alejandro, who has moved several times, knows that the adjustment process cannot be rushed. He relates: “After our last move, my wife said, ‘All my friends are in our previous congregation!’” He reminded her that she had said exactly the same thing two years earlier—the last time they moved. But during those two years, she showed interest in others and strangers became close friends.

“Do not say, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ for it is not out of wisdom that you ask this.”—Eccl. 7:10.

Avoid comparing your new congregation with your previous one. For example, the brothers in your new congregation may be more reserved or more outspoken than you are used to. Focus on their positive traits, just as you want them to focus on yours. Some newcomers realized to their surprise that their move forced them to ask

How Can the Elders Help?

The elders want you to enjoy your new congregation, and they are ready to assist.

- The Congregation Service Committee should promptly assign you to a field service group.
- The secretary will no doubt ask you for contact information from your previous congrega-

tion so that he can obtain your *Congregation's Publisher Record* card(s).

- Your new field service group overseer should endeavor to share with you in the ministry soon after your arrival. It would be good if he also made a friendly shepherding call on your family.

- The elders should request your emergency contact information so that they can reach you if a disaster strikes.

- It would be good if the elders also verified that your medical directive card is updated.

themselves, ‘Do I truly love “the whole association of brothers”?’—1 Pet. 2:17.

“Keep on asking, and it will be given you.”
—Luke 11:9.

Continue to pray for help. “Don’t just tough it out,” says David, an elder. “Many things we can do only with Jehovah’s help. Pray about it!” Rachel, quoted earlier, agrees. “If my husband and I feel a little disconnected from the congregation,” she says, “we pray specifically to Jehovah, ‘Please let us know if we are doing something that makes it hard for others to be drawn to us.’ Then we try to spend more time with the brothers and sisters.”

Parents, if your children are struggling to fit in, take time to pray with them about this matter. Help them to make new friends by arranging opportunities for upbuilding association.

HELP NEWCOMERS TO FEEL ACCEPTED

What can you do to help newcomers who have moved into your congregation? Strive to be a true friend from the start. To do so, try to imagine what things you would appreciate if you were a new arrival, and then do those things. (Matt. 7:

12) Could new ones join you for family worship or for the monthly JW Broadcasting program? Could you invite them to accompany you in the ministry? If you share a simple meal together, they will long remember your hospitality. What further practical help can you give to newcomers?

“When we arrived in our new congregation,” says Carlos, “a sister gave us a list of stores that have reasonable prices. That helped a lot.” Those arriving from a location with a different climate may be grateful to learn how to dress in your hot, cold, or rainy weather. You could also help them to be more effective in their ministry by relating to them the history of the community or by explaining the local religious beliefs.

MAKING ADJUSTMENTS IS WORTH THE EFFORT

Allen, mentioned in the introduction, has been in his new congregation for over a year. He reflects: “I had to push myself at first to get to know the brothers and sisters. But now they feel more like family, and I am happy.” Allen realizes that by moving, he did not lose any friends. Instead, he gained new ones, who will likely remain his friends for life.



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