



FEBRUARY 15, 2011

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## STUDY EDITION

STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE WEEKS OF:

**April 4-10**

Holy Spirit—At Work in Creation!

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**April 11-17**

Gaining God's Approval  
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Do You Hate Lawlessness?

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

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## PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

### STUDY ARTICLE 1 PAGES 6-10

Points presented in this article will deepen our understanding of how God used his holy spirit to create the heavens and the earth. This study will also strengthen our conviction that Jehovah is our wise and powerful Creator.

### STUDY ARTICLE 2 PAGES 13-17

People in general concern themselves mostly with material security. But the Bible shows that we should be more concerned with gaining God's approval. This article stresses the need for us to build our trust in Jehovah and shows what measures we can take to be assured of his favor.

### STUDY ARTICLES 3, 4 PAGES 24-32

'Jesus loved righteousness, and he hated lawlessness.' (Heb. 1:9) These articles show how we can imitate him. They point out why it is important that we learn to love righteousness and cultivate a hatred for lawlessness.

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# Teach Your Children to Be Respectful

A GERMAN proverb states: “With hat in hand, one goes through all the land.” In many cultures, a man’s removing his hat upon entering someone’s home or when exchanging greetings was considered a gesture of courtesy that won him respect. Hence, the meaning of the aforementioned proverb is that people are inclined to be kinder and are better disposed toward those who have good manners.

How refreshing it is when young people are well-mannered! A circuit overseer in Honduras who accompanies publishers of various ages in the door-to-door evangelizing work notes, “I have often found that a well-trained and respectful child has more of an impact on a householder than my words do.”

In these times of growing disrespect, knowing how to treat others is practical and beneficial. More than that, the Scriptures admonish us to “behave in a manner worthy of the good news about the Christ.” (Phil. 1:27; 2 Tim. 3:1-5) It is vital that we teach our children to respect others. How can they be taught not just to be outwardly polite but to be genuinely respectful?\*

\* Of course, parents need to help their children see the difference between being respectful to adults and submitting to someone whose motive might be harmful. See *Awake!* of October 2007, pages 3-11.



## Good Manners Taught by Example

Children learn by imitating the examples they observe. So a fundamental way in which parents can instill good manners in their children is by being well-mannered themselves. (Deut. 6:6, 7) Reasoning with your child about politeness is important, but that alone is not enough. Along with the reminders, a good example is absolutely essential.

Consider the case of Paula,\* who was raised in a Christian household by a single parent. Showing respect to all became a part of her personality. Why? She answers, “Mom set the example, so being respectful came naturally to us children.” A Christian named Walter taught his sons to respect their unbelieving mother. He says, “I sought to teach my sons to respect their mother by my own example, never speaking disparagingly of my wife.” Walter

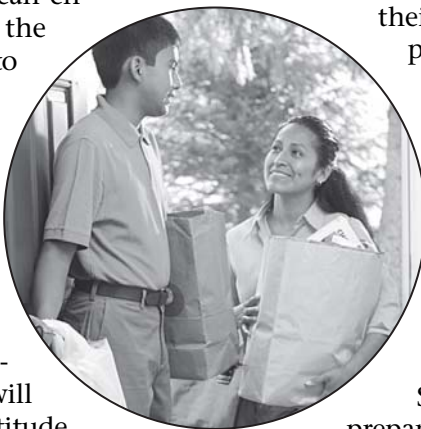
\* Some names have been changed.



continued to instruct his boys in God's Word, and he prayed for Jehovah's help. One of them now serves at a branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the other is a pioneer. His sons love and respect both of their parents.

The Bible states: "God is a God, not of disorder, but of peace." (1 Cor. 14:33) Everything Jehovah does is orderly. Christians should strive to imitate this godly quality and keep things tidy in the home. Some parents have trained their children to make their beds every day before going to school, to put their clothes in the proper place, and to help with household chores. If children observe a well-ordered and clean environment in the rest of the home, they are more likely to keep their rooms and possessions neat.

How do your children view what they are learning at school? Do they express appreciation for what their teachers are doing for them? As a parent, do you express such appreciation? Your children will tend to reflect the same attitude toward their schoolwork and teachers that you display. Why not encourage them to make a practice of thanking their teachers? Expressing gratitude for services rendered is an excellent way to show respect, whether to a teacher, a doctor, a shopkeeper, or anyone else. (Luke 17:15, 16) Young Christians who stand out among their schoolmates because of politeness and good conduct are to be commended.



Members of the Christian congregation should set a fine example when it comes to manners. How good it is to see youths who are associated with the congregation display graciousness by saying "please" and "thank you"!

When adults show respect for Jehovah by being attentive to the instruction provided during the meetings, young ones are encouraged to imitate them. Children can learn to respect their neighbors by observing fine examples of good manners at the Kingdom Hall. For instance, four-year-old Andrew has already learned to say, "Excuse me," when he has to pass by adults.

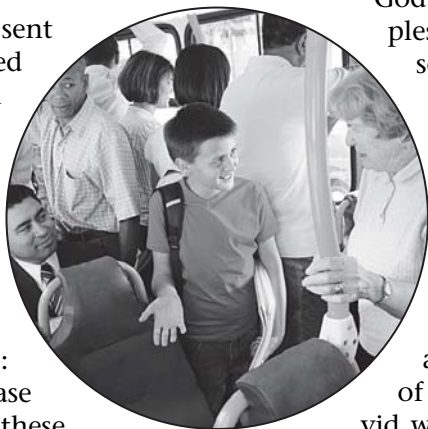
What else can parents do to help their children learn what is expected of them in the way of proper conduct? Parents can and should take time to share with their children the lessons learned from the many examples found in God's Word.—Rom. 15:4.

### Teach With Bible Examples

Samuel's mother most likely prepared her son to bow before High Priest Eli. When she took Samuel to the tabernacle, he was probably only three or four years old. (1 Sam. 1:28) Could you rehearse with your little child such greetings as "good morning," "good afternoon," "good evening," or whatever is customary where you live? Like young Samuel, your children too can be "likable both from Jehovah's standpoint and from that of men." —1 Sam. 2:26.

Why not use Bible accounts to highlight the contrast between respect and disrespect? For example, when Israel's unfaithful King Ahaziah wanted to see the prophet Elijah, he dispatched 'a chief of fifty and his fifty men' to summon him. The officer demanded that the prophet accompany him. That was no way to speak to a man who was God's representative. How did Elijah answer? "Well, if I am a man of God," he said, "let fire come down from the heavens and eat up you and your fifty." And that is exactly what happened. "Fire came descending from the heavens and went eating up him and his fifty."—2 Ki. 1:9, 10.

A second chief of 50 was sent to get Elijah. He too tried to order Elijah to go with him. Once again, fire came down from the heavens. But then, a third chief of 50 came to Elijah. This man showed respect. Instead of giving Elijah an order, he bent down upon his knees and pleaded: "Man of the true God, please let my soul and the soul of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your eyes. Here fire came down from the heavens and went eating up the two former chiefs of fifty and their fifties, but now let my soul be precious in your eyes." Would God's prophet call down fire on someone who may have been fearful but spoke with such respect? That would be unthinkable! Instead, Jehovah's angel told Elijah to go with this officer. (2 Ki. 1:11-15) Does that



not emphasize the value of showing respect?

When the apostle Paul was taken into custody at the temple by Roman soldiers, he did not assume that he had the right to speak. He respectfully asked the officer in charge: "Am I allowed to say something to you?" As a result, Paul was given the opportunity to speak in his own defense.—Acts 21:37-40.

While on trial, Jesus was slapped in the face. However, he knew how to protest: "If I spoke wrongly, bear witness concerning the wrong; but if rightly, why do you hit me?" No one could find any fault with the way Jesus spoke.—John 18:22, 23.

God's Word also provides examples of how we may respond to severe correction and how to acknowledge respectfully some past wrongdoing or negligence. (Gen. 41:9-13; Acts 8:20-24) For example, Abigail apologized for the insolent way in which her husband, Nabal, treated David. To her apology she added a gift of generous provisions. David was so impressed with what Abigail did that after Nabal's death he chose her to be his wife.—1 Sam. 25:23-41.

Teach your children to be respectful, whether it is a matter of showing respect under trying circumstances or simply of displaying good manners. 'Letting our light shine before men' in this way 'brings glory to our Father, who is in the heavens.'—Matt. 5:16.

# HOLY SPIRIT —AT WORK IN CREATION!

*“By the word of Jehovah the heavens themselves were made,  
and by the spirit of his mouth all their army.”—PS. 33:6.*

WHEN Albert Einstein published his special theory of relativity in 1905, he and many other scientists believed that the universe consisted of just one galaxy—our Milky Way. How greatly they underestimated the size of the universe! It is now thought that the heavens contain over 100 billion galaxies, some consisting of billions of stars. As ever more sensitive telescopes are used on earth or put into orbit around it, the number of known galaxies keeps climbing.

<sup>2</sup> Just as scientific knowledge of the heavens was limited in 1905, so was knowledge of the earth. True, people living a century ago knew more than their forebears. Today, however, the beauty and complexity of life and the terrestrial systems that sustain it are far better understood than they were at that time. And we will undoubtedly learn much more about the earth and the heavens in the years ahead. But especially is it appropriate to ask, How did all of this come to be in the first place? The answer to that question can be known only because the Creator has revealed it through the Holy Scriptures.

## The Miracle of Creation

<sup>3</sup> How the universe came to be is explained in the Bible’s opening words: “In

1, 2. (a) How has man’s knowledge of the heavens and the earth increased over time? (b) What question requires an answer?

3, 4. How did God create the universe, and how do his works glorify him?

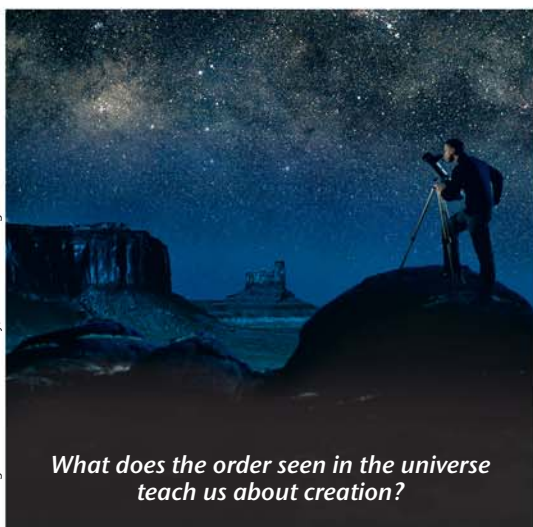
the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Gen. 1:1) Starting with no preexisting material, Jehovah used his holy spirit—his powerful active force—to create the physical heavens, the earth, and everything else in the universe. A human craftsman uses his hands and tools to make things, but God sends forth holy spirit to accomplish his great works.

<sup>4</sup> The Scriptures figuratively refer to holy spirit as God’s “finger.” (Luke 11:20; Matt. 12:28) And “the work of his hands”—what Jehovah created by means of his holy spirit—brings him great glory. “The heavens are declaring the glory of God,” sang the psalmist David, “and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling.” (Ps. 19:1) Indeed, physical creation testifies to the awesome power of God’s holy spirit. (Rom. 1:20) How does it do so?

## God’s Limitless Power

<sup>5</sup> Our unimaginably vast universe gives evidence that Jehovah’s power and energy are inexhaustible. (**Read Isaiah 40:26.**) Modern science is aware that matter can be changed into energy and energy into matter. Our sun, a star, provides an example of matter being turned into energy. Every second, the sun converts about four million tons of matter into sunlight and other forms of radiant energy. The small fraction of that

5. Illustrate the creative power of Jehovah’s holy spirit.



*What does the order seen in the universe teach us about creation?*

energy that reaches us is sufficient to sustain life on the earth. Obviously, tremendous power and energy were required to create not just the sun but also all the other billions of stars. Jehovah possesses the energy that was needed—and much more.

<sup>6</sup> We are surrounded by evidence that God used his holy spirit in a very orderly way. To illustrate: Suppose you had a box containing balls of different colors. You shake the box, thoroughly mixing the balls. Then you throw them out onto the ground all at once. Would you expect the balls to land grouped according to color—the blue balls together, the yellow likewise, and so on? Of course not! Uncontrolled actions always tend to result in less order, not more. That fact is accepted as a fundamental law of nature.\*

<sup>7</sup> Yet, when we raise our eyes and telescopes heavenward, what do we see? We find an immense and highly ordered system of

\* See pages 24 and 25 of the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?*

6, 7. (a) Why can we say that God has used his holy spirit in an orderly way? (b) What shows that the universe did not come about by chance?

galaxies, stars, and planets, all moving with great precision. This could not be the product of chance or of an unplanned and uncontrolled cosmic accident. So we must ask, What force was originally employed in order to produce our orderly universe? We humans are limited in our ability to identify that force through scientific observation and experimentation alone. However, the Bible has identified it as God's holy spirit, the most powerful force in the universe. The psalmist sang: "By the word of Jehovah the heavens themselves were made, and by the spirit of his mouth all their army." (Ps. 33:6) And with our eyes, we can see only a very small part of that "army" of stars as we survey the night sky!

### Holy Spirit and the Earth

<sup>8</sup> What we presently understand about nature is infinitesimal when compared with all there is to learn. As for the scope of our knowledge of God's creative works, the faithful man Job concluded: "Look! These are the fringes of his ways, and what a whisper of a matter has been heard of him!" (Job 26:14) Centuries later, King Solomon, an astute observer of Jehovah's creation, declared: "Everything [God] has made pretty in its time. Even time indefinite he has put in their heart, that mankind may never find out the work that the true God has made from the start to the finish."—Eccl. 3:11; 8:17.

<sup>9</sup> Jehovah has, however, revealed essential details about his works. For instance, the Scriptures inform us that God's spirit was active on the earth aeons ago. (***Read Genesis 1:2.***) At that time, there was no dry land,

8. How much do we really know about Jehovah's works?

9, 10. God used what force when he created the earth, and what were some developments during the first three creative days?



no light, and apparently no breathable air at the earth's surface.

<sup>10</sup> The Bible goes on to describe what God did during a series of creative days. These are not 24-hour days but are epochs. On the first creative day, Jehovah caused light to begin to appear at the earth's surface. That process would be completed when the sun and the moon later became discernible from the earth. (Gen. 1:3, 14) On the second day, the atmosphere began to be formed. (Gen. 1:6) Earth then had water, light, and air but still no dry land. Early on the third creative day, Jehovah used his holy spirit to produce dry land, perhaps harnessing powerful geologic forces to push continents up out of the global sea. (Gen. 1:9) There would be other astounding developments on the third day and during later creative periods.

### Holy Spirit and Living Creatures

<sup>11</sup> God's spirit also produced highly organized works in the biological sphere of creation. By means of his holy spirit, during creative days three through six, God created an astounding variety of plants and animals. (Gen. 1:11, 20-25) Thus, living things provide countless examples of complexity, symmetry, and beauty that bespeak design of the highest level.

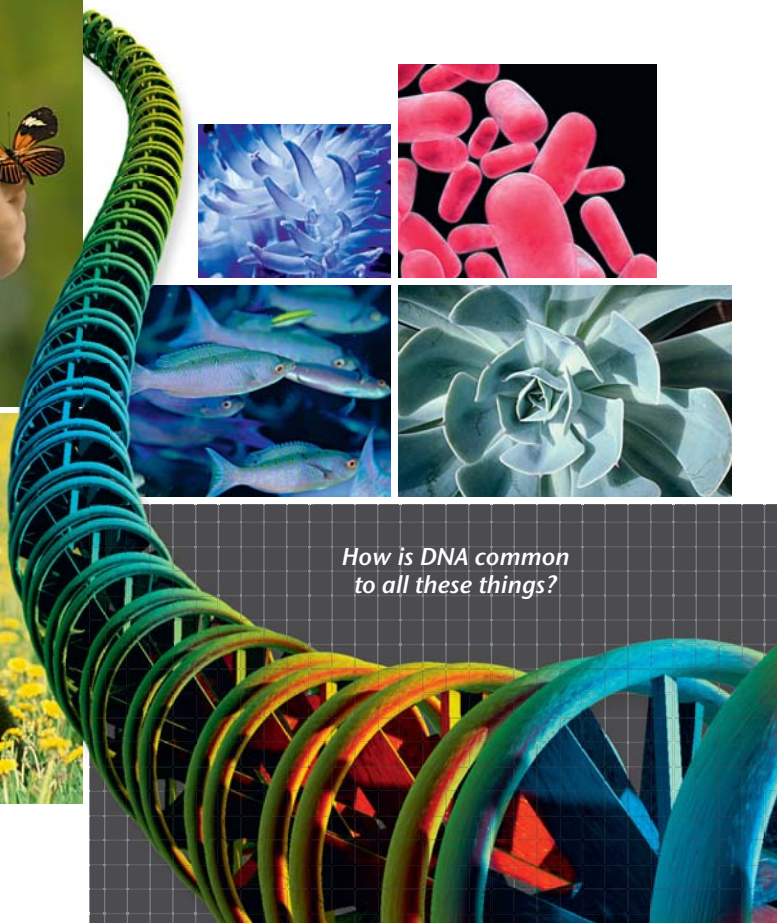
<sup>12</sup> Consider DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), one of the chemical mechanisms involved in passing on the characteristics of organisms from one generation to the next. All living things on the earth—including microbes, grass, elephants, blue whales, and humans—reproduce using DNA. Although

11. What is demonstrated by the complexity, symmetry, and beauty of living things?

12. (a) DNA performs what function? (b) What should we learn from the continuing successful function of DNA?



*How is DNA common to all these things?*





the earth's creatures differ widely, the code that controls many of their inherited characteristics is very stable and has served to maintain the distinction between basic kinds of creatures down through the ages. According to Jehovah God's purpose, the earth's various organisms therefore continue to perform their functions in the complex web of life. (Ps. 139:16) This very effective, orderly arrangement provides further evidence that creation is the work of God's "finger," or holy spirit.

### **The Climax of Earthly Creation**

<sup>13</sup> After aeons had passed and God had produced innumerable animate and inanimate works, the earth was no longer "formless and waste." Yet, Jehovah had not finished using his spirit for creative purposes. He was about to produce his highest earthly creation. Toward the end of the sixth creative day, God created man. How did Jehovah do so? By using his holy spirit and the elements of the earth.—Gen. 2:7.

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 1:27 states: "God proceeded to create the man in his image, in God's image he created him; male and female he created them." Being made in God's image means that Jehovah created us with the ability to display love, to exercise free will, and even to establish a personal relationship with our Creator. Hence, our brains differ greatly from those of animals. Specifically, Jehovah designed the human brain so that we could go on joyfully learning about him and his works forever.

<sup>15</sup> At mankind's beginning, God gave Adam and his wife, Eve, the earth and all its

wonders to investigate and enjoy. (Gen. 1:28) Jehovah provided abundant food and a paradise home for them. They had the opportunity to live forever and become the beloved parents of billions of perfect descendants. Yet, things did not work out that way.

### **Acknowledging the Role of Holy Spirit**

<sup>16</sup> Instead of gratefully obeying their Creator, Adam and Eve selfishly rebelled. All imperfect humans have descended from them and have suffered as a result. But the Bible explains how God will undo all the damage caused by the sinful course of our first parents. The Scriptures also show that Jehovah will fulfill his original purpose. Earth will become a paradise filled with happy, healthy people blessed with everlasting life. (Gen. 3:15) To maintain faith in that heart-warming prospect, we need the help of God's holy spirit.

<sup>17</sup> We should pray to Jehovah for holy spirit. (Luke 11:13) Doing so will help us to reinforce our conviction that creation is the work of God's hand. Today, there is a rising tide of atheistic and evolutionist propaganda dependent on flawed and baseless reasoning. We should not let this flood of faulty thinking confuse or intimidate us. All Christians must prepare themselves to resist such an onslaught and the peer pressure associated with it.—***Read Colossians 2:8.***

<sup>18</sup> Faith in the Bible and in God himself is sure to be strengthened by an honest examination of the evidence in favor of creation. In contemplating the origin of the universe and mankind, many would like to rule out

16. We have what hope despite the rebellion of the first humans?

17. What kind of thinking must we avoid?

18. When considering the origin of the universe and mankind, why would it be shortsighted to rule out an intelligent Creator?

13. How did God create man?

14. In what important way do humans differ from animals?

15. What prospect was placed before Adam and Eve?



*Are you prepared to defend your faith?*

the influence of any force outside the physical realm. If we were to discuss matters from that standpoint, though, we would not be weighing all the evidence impartially. Moreover, we would be ignoring the obvious existence of orderly, purposeful creations “without number.” (Job 9:10; Ps. 104:25) As Christians, we are certain that the active force involved in creation was holy spirit under the intelligent direction of Jehovah.

### **Holy Spirit and Our Faith in God**

<sup>19</sup> We do not need to know everything about creation in order to have faith in God as well as love and profound reverence for him. Like friendship with a human, faith in Jehovah is based on more than cold facts. Just as a relationship between friends grows as they get to know each other better, our faith in God increases as we learn more about him. Indeed, his very existence is impressed upon us when he answers our prayers and we note the good effects of applying his principles in our life. We draw ever closer to Jehovah as we see mounting

19. What provides personal proof of the existence of God and the operation of his spirit?

evidence that he is guiding our steps, protecting us, blessing our efforts in his service, and supplying the things we need. All of this provides powerful confirmation of God’s existence and of the operation of his holy spirit.

<sup>20</sup> The Bible is an outstanding example of Jehovah’s use of his active force because its writers “spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit.” (2 Pet. 1:21) Careful study of the Scriptures can build our faith in God as the one who created all things. (Rev. 4:11) Jehovah became the Creator as an expression of his endearing quality of love. (1 John 4:8) Let us, therefore, do our utmost to help others to learn about our loving heavenly Father and Friend. In our own case, if we continue to be led by God’s spirit, we will be privileged to learn about him forever. (Gal. 5:16, 25) May each of us keep on learning about Jehovah and his great works and reflect in our lives the boundless love he showed when he used his holy spirit to create the heavens, the earth, and mankind.

20. (a) Why did God create the universe and man?  
(b) What will result if we continue to follow the lead of God’s holy spirit?

### **Can You Explain?**

- What does the existence of the heavens and the earth teach us about God’s use of holy spirit?
- Being made in God’s image gives us what opportunities?
- Why do we need to examine the evidence for creation?
- In what ways can our relationship with Jehovah grow?

# It Is Worth the Effort!



**F**AMILY WORSHIP and Bible study are essential if children are to be brought up “in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.” (Eph. 6:4) If you are a parent, though, you know that young ones can easily become bored. How can you keep their attention? Consider what some parents have done.

“When the children were younger,” says George, in California, U.S.A., “my wife and I tried to keep the family Bible study fresh. Sometimes we all would dress up as Bible characters and act out an account as we read from *My Book of Bible Stories*. We even made props—swords, scepters, baskets, and the like. We also played ‘guess who I am’ Bible games and created a Bible board game with questions of varying difficulty. Then there were projects, such as building a model of Noah’s ark or creating a time line of Bible events. Sometimes we used drawing sessions in which we depicted Bible characters or stories. Currently, we are planning a drawing project on the spiritual armor described at Ephesians 6:11-17, with each of us explaining what a certain piece represents. These methods have helped us to enjoy our family study.”

Debi, a mother in Michigan, U.S.A., relates: “My husband and I had trouble reaching our daughter when she was about three years old.

Then, one day while reading aloud the story of Isaac and Rebekah from *My Book of Bible Stories*, I scooped up two dolls and began to ad-lib. Now she held on to every word! In the months that followed, those two dolls became many different Bible characters. After we read an account, our daughter would search the house for toys or other items that could be used to act out the story. It was like a treasure hunt! A shoe box and a red ribbon became Rahab’s house with a scarlet cord. A five-foot-long [1.5 m] stuffed toy snake wrapped around a broomstick worked well as the copper serpent of Numbers 21:4-9. We kept the props in a large canvas bag. To our delight, our girl would often sit in the living room and rummage through her ‘Bible story bag.’ What a joy to see her dramatize the stories in her own little way!”

Raising children is not easy, and it takes more than weekly sessions to instill in them a desire to serve Jehovah. But family worship and Bible study can be a base for other spiritual instruction. Without question, it is worth the effort!





## Questions From Readers

**Why did Moses become angry with Aaron's sons Eleazar and Ithamar after the death of their brothers Nadab and Abihu, and how was his anger appeased? —Lev. 10:16-20.**

Shortly after the installation of the priesthood for service at the tabernacle, Jehovah executed Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu because they had offered illegitimate fire before Him. (Lev. 10:1, 2) Moses ordered Aaron's surviving sons not to mourn their dead brothers. Not long thereafter, Moses became indignant at Eleazar and Ithamar because they had not eaten the goat of the sin offering. (Lev. 9:3) Why did Moses react this way?

The laws that Jehovah had given Moses specified that the priest who offered up a sin offering was to eat part of it in the courtyard of the tent of meeting. Doing so was considered to be answering for the sins of those who made the sacrifice. However, if some of the blood of the sacrifice was taken into the Holy Place, the first compartment of the sanctuary, the offering was not to be eaten. Instead, it was to be burned.—Lev. 6:24-26, 30.

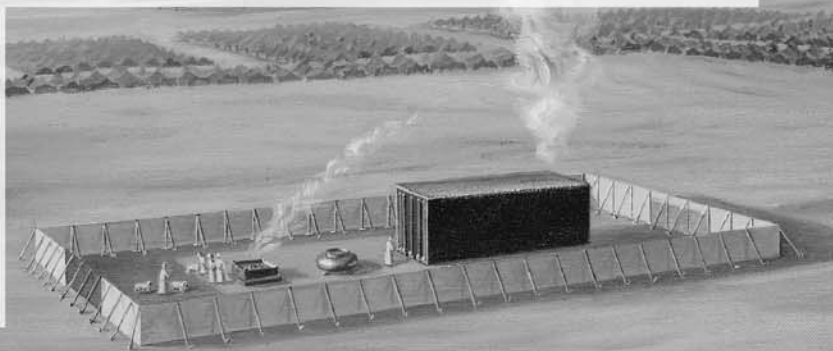
It appears that after the tragic events of that day, Moses saw the need to make sure that all of Jehovah's commandments had been followed. On discovering that the goat of the sin offering had been burned, he indignantly asked Eleazar and Ithamar why they had not eaten it as directed, because its blood had not been presented

before Jehovah in the Holy Place.—Lev. 10:17, 18.

Aaron answered Moses' question, since the surviving priests had evidently acted as they did with his approval. In the light of the execution of two of his sons, Aaron may have wondered whether any of the priests could in good conscience eat of the sin offering on that day. Perhaps he felt that their eating of it would not be pleasing to Jehovah, even though they bore no direct responsibility for the error committed by Nadab and Abihu.—Lev. 10:19.

Aaron may especially have reasoned that on the day when members of his family *first* performed their priestly duties, they should have exercised great care to please God in even the smallest detail. However, Jehovah's name had been profaned by Nadab and Abihu, and God's anger had blazed against them. So Aaron may have thought that members of a priestly family in which such sin was found should not partake of a holy offering.

Moses seems to have accepted his brother's answer, for the passage concludes: "When Moses got to hear that, then it proved satisfactory in his eyes." (Lev. 10:20) Evidently, Jehovah too was satisfied with Aaron's answer.



# GAINING GOD'S APPROVAL LEADS TO EVERLASTING LIFE

*"You yourself will bless anyone righteous, O Jehovah; as with a large shield, with approval you will surround them."—PS. 5:12.*

THE woman and her son were hungry, and so was God's prophet. As this widow in Zarephath got ready to light a cooking fire, the prophet Elijah asked her for water and bread. She was willing to give him something to drink, but all she had for food was "a handful of flour in the large jar and a little oil in the small jar." She felt that she was in no position to give the prophet any food, and she told him so.—1 Ki. 17:8-12.

<sup>2</sup> "From what is there make me a small round cake first," persisted Elijah, "and you must bring it out to me, and for yourself and your son you can make something afterward. For this is what Jehovah the God of Israel has said, 'The large jar of flour itself will not get exhausted, and the small jar of oil itself will not fail.'"—1 Ki. 17:13, 14.

<sup>3</sup> The issue before the widow was more critical than deciding what to do with her

1, 2. What request did Elijah make of the widow in Zarephath, and what assurance did he give her?

3. What important issue is set before us?

*God's prophet placed what important issue before a needy mother?*

last bit of food. Would she trust in Jehovah to save her and her son, or would she put her material needs ahead of gaining God's approval and friendship? A similar question stands before all of us. Will we show greater concern for gaining Jehovah's approval than for seeking material security? We have every reason to trust and serve God. And there are steps we can take to seek and gain his approval.

**'You Are Worthy to Receive Worship'**

<sup>4</sup> Jehovah has the right to expect that

4. Why is Jehovah worthy of receiving our worship?



humans will serve him acceptably. A group of his heavenly servants confirmed that fact in unison, saying: “You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created.” (Rev. 4:11) By reason of his Creatorship, Jehovah is worthy of our worship.

<sup>5</sup> Another reason for us to serve Jehovah is his matchless love for us. “God proceeded to create the man in his image,” states the Bible, “in God’s image he created him; male and female he created them.” (Gen. 1:27) Man is a free moral agent with the God-given ability to think and to make decisions. By giving us life, Jehovah became Father to humankind. (Luke 3:38) Like any good father, he has done everything to provide what his sons and daughters need in order to enjoy life. “He makes his sun rise” and “makes it rain,” so that planet Earth produces abundant food for us against a backdrop of beautiful surroundings.—Matt. 5:45.

<sup>6</sup> Jehovah has also rescued us from the terrible consequences of sin. By sinning, Adam became like a gambler who steals from his family to engage in gambling. By rebelling against Jehovah, Adam robbed his children of their prospect—eternal happiness. His selfishness reduced humankind to slavery under a cruel master, imperfection. All humans are thus bound to get sick, experience sadness, and eventually die. Freeing a slave requires a payment, and Jehovah has made the payment that can save us from those dreadful consequences. (**Read Romans 5:21.**) Acting in harmony with his Fa-

ther’s will, Jesus Christ gave “his soul a ransom in exchange for many.” (Matt. 20:28) Soon the full benefits of that ransom payment will accrue to those who gain God’s approval.

<sup>7</sup> Our Creator, Jehovah, has done more than anyone to give us a happy, purposeful life. Having his approval, we will be able to see how he works to undo all the damage done to the human race. In a personal way, Jehovah will continue to show us how he becomes “the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.”—Heb. 11:6.

### **“Your People Will Offer Themselves Willingly”**

<sup>8</sup> Gaining God’s approval involves the proper exercise of our free will. This is because Jehovah does not coerce anyone into serving him. In Isaiah’s time, He asked: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” By recognizing the prophet’s right to decide, Jehovah dignified him. Imagine Isaiah’s satisfaction in responding: “Here I am! Send me.”—Isa. 6:8.

<sup>9</sup> Humans are free to serve God or not to do so. Jehovah wants us to serve him willingly. (**Read Joshua 24:15.**) Any who begrudge God their worship cannot be pleasing to him; nor does he accept the devotion of those whose true intent is only to please other humans. (Col. 3:22) If we rendered sacred service “hesitantly” by allowing worldly interests to interfere with our worship, we would not win God’s approval. (Ex. 22:29) Jehovah knows that serving him whole-souled is good for us. Moses urged the Israelites to choose life ‘by loving Jehovah their

5. Why should God’s love motivate us to serve him?

6, 7. (a) What harm did Adam bring upon all his descendants? (b) What will Christ’s sacrifice do for those who seek God’s approval?

8. What does Isaiah’s experience teach us about serving God?

9, 10. (a) With what attitude should we serve God? (b) Why is it appropriate for us to serve Jehovah whole-souled?



God, by listening to his voice and by sticking to him.’—Deut. 30:19, 20.

<sup>10</sup> King David of ancient Israel sang to Jehovah: “Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day of your military force. In the splendors of holiness, from the womb of the dawn, you have your company of young men just like dewdrops.” (Ps. 110:3) Many people today live for financial security and leisure. For those who love Jehovah, however, their sacred service comes before everything else. The zeal with which they preach the good news proves where their priorities lie. They have full confidence in Jehovah’s ability to supply their daily needs.—Matt. 6:33, 34.

### **Sacrifices That Meet With God’s Approval**

<sup>11</sup> Under the Law covenant, God’s people offered acceptable sacrifices to gain his favor. “In case you should sacrifice a communion sacrifice to Jehovah,” says Leviticus 19:5, “you should sacrifice it to gain approval for yourselves.” In the same Bible book, we read: “In case you should sacrifice a thanksgiving sacrifice to Jehovah, you should sacrifice it to gain approval for you.” (Lev. 22:29) When the Israelites offered up proper animal sacrifices on Jehovah’s altar, the smoke that drifted up was like “a restful odor” to the true God. (Lev. 1:9, 13) He felt soothed and refreshed by those expressions of love from his people. (Gen. 8:21, ftn.) In these fea-

11. What benefit did the Israelites hope to receive by offering sacrifices to Jehovah?

*What benefit do we receive  
by offering a sacrifice of  
praise to Jehovah?*

tures of the Law, we find a principle that applies today. Those offering acceptable sacrifices to Jehovah receive his approval. What sacrifices does he accept? Consider two areas of life: our conduct and our speech.

<sup>12</sup> In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul wrote: “Present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason.” (Rom. 12:1) Gaining God’s approval requires that a person keep his body acceptable to God. If he were to defile himself with tobacco, betel nut, illicit drugs, or alcohol abuse, that offering would have no value. (2 Cor. 7:1) Moreover, since he that “practices fornication is sinning against his own body,” immoral conduct of any kind renders his sacrifice offensive to Jehovah. (1 Cor. 6:18) To please God, a person must ‘become holy in all his conduct.’—1 Pet. 1:14-16.

<sup>13</sup> Another sacrifice that Jehovah delights in has to do with our power of speech. Those loving Jehovah have always spoken

12. What practices would make the ‘presenting of our bodies as a sacrifice’ offensive to God?

13. Why is it fitting that we praise Jehovah?



well of him in public and in the privacy of their homes. (**Read Psalm 34:1-3.**) Read Psalms 148-150, and observe how often these three psalms encourage us to praise Jehovah. Truly, “on the part of the upright ones praise is fitting.” (Ps. 33:1) And our Exemplar, Jesus Christ, stressed the importance of praising God by preaching the good news.—Luke 4:18, 43, 44.

<sup>14</sup> By preaching with zeal, we give evidence of our love for Jehovah and our desire for his approval. For example, consider how the prophet Hosea exhorted the Israelites who had taken up false worship and had lost God’s favor. (Hos. 13:1-3) Hosea told them to plead: “May you [Jehovah] pardon error; and accept what is good, and we will offer in return the young bulls of our lips.”—Hos. 14:1, 2.

<sup>15</sup> A bull was the costliest animal that an Israelite could offer to Jehovah. Hence, “the young bulls of our lips” referred to sincere, well-thought-out words spoken in praise of the true God. How did Jehovah respond to those making such sacrifices? He said: “I shall love them of my own free will.” (Hos. 14:4) To those offering such sacrifices of praise, Jehovah granted his forgiveness, approval, and friendship.

14, 15. Hosea urged the Israelites to offer what type of sacrifices, and how did Jehovah respond?

### Do You Recall?

- Why does Jehovah deserve our heartfelt worship?
- What sacrifices does Jehovah accept today?
- The expression “the young bulls of our lips” refers to what, and why should we offer them to Jehovah?
- Why should we seek God’s approval?

<sup>16</sup> Praising Jehovah publicly has always been a prominent part of true worship. Glorifying the true God meant so much to the psalmist that he beseeched God: “Please take pleasure in the voluntary offerings of my mouth, O Jehovah.” (Ps. 119:108) What about today? Speaking of a large crowd of people in our time, Isaiah prophesied: “The praises of Jehovah they will announce. . . . With approval they [their gifts] will come up upon my [God’s] altar.” (Isa. 60:6, 7) In fulfillment, millions are offering God “a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name.”—Heb. 13:15.

<sup>17</sup> What about you? Are you offering God acceptable sacrifices? If not, will you make needed changes and begin praising Jehovah publicly? When faith moves you to start preaching the good news, your offering will be “more pleasing to Jehovah than a bull.” (**Read Psalm 69:30, 31.**) Be assured that “the restful odor” of your sacrifice of praise will reach Jehovah and that he will grant you his approval. (Ezek. 20:41) The joy that you will then feel has no equal.

### ‘Jehovah Himself Will Bless Anyone Righteous’

<sup>18</sup> Today, many people draw the same conclusion as some did in Malachi’s time: “It is useless to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his charge?” (Mal. 3:14, *An American Translation*) Led on by materialistic desires, they view God’s purpose as unattainable and his laws as no longer applicable. To them, the preaching of

16, 17. When faith in God moves a person to preach the good news, how does Jehovah receive that one’s praise?

18, 19. (a) What view of serving God do many people hold today? (b) Losing God’s favor leads to what?

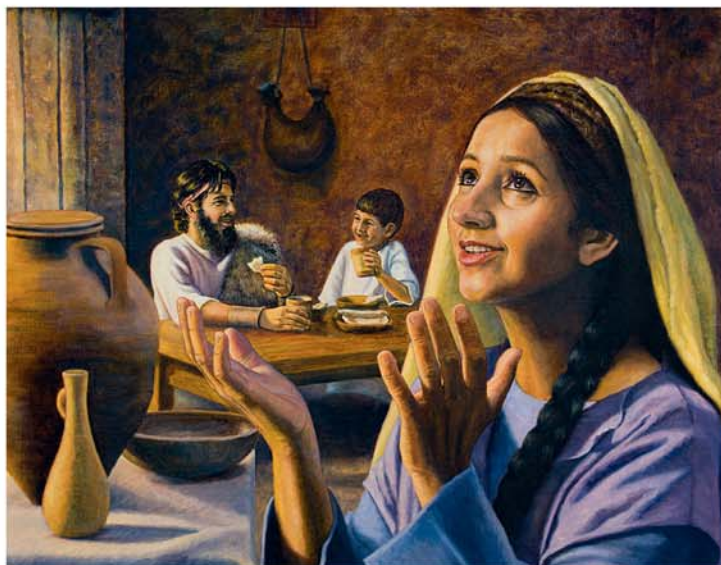
*Your genuine trust  
in Jehovah will never  
lead to disappointment*

the good news is a waste of time and a source of irritation.

<sup>19</sup> The driving force behind such ideas goes back to the garden of Eden. It was Satan who persuaded Eve to disregard the real value of the wonderful life Jehovah had given her and to disdain His approval. Today, Satan eggs people on to believe that nothing is to be gained by doing God's will. However, Eve and her husband discovered that losing God's favor meant losing their lives. Those who now follow their bad example will soon come to realize the same bitter truth.—Gen. 3:1-7, 17-19.

<sup>20</sup> Contrast the sad ending of Adam and Eve with the outcome of the events mentioned earlier regarding Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. After hearing Elijah's encouraging words, the woman began baking and first served the prophet some bread. Then Jehovah fulfilled the promise he made through Elijah. The account states: "She continued to eat, she together with him and her household, for days. The large jar of flour itself did not get exhausted, and the small jar of oil itself did not fail, according to Jehovah's word that he had spoken by means of Elijah."—1 Ki. 17:15, 16.

<sup>21</sup> The widow of Zarephath did something that few people of the billions now



alive are willing to do. She put her complete trust in the God of salvation, and he did not leave her in the lurch. This and other Bible accounts confirm that Jehovah deserves our trust. (**Read Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14.**) The lives of modern-day Witnesses of Jehovah provide further proof that he will never abandon those who have his approval.—Ps. 34:6, 7, 17-19.\*

<sup>22</sup> God's day of judgment "upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth" is imminent. (Luke 21:34, 35) There is no escaping it. No riches or material comforts can ever come near in value to hearing God's appointed Judge say: "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." (Matt. 25:34) Yes, 'Jehovah himself will bless anyone righteous; as with a large shield, with approval he will surround them.' (Ps. 5:12) Should we not seek God's approval?

\* See *The Watchtower*, March 15, 2005, page 13, paragraph 15; August 1, 1997, pages 20-25.

22. Why is it urgent that we seek God's approval without delay?

20, 21. (a) What did the widow of Zarephath do, and how did the matter turn out for her? (b) How and why should we imitate the widow of Zarephath?



# Do You Really Appreciate Your Blessings?


**H**AVING been miraculously delivered from slavery in Egypt, the sons of Israel were initially delighted to be free to worship Jehovah. (Ex. 14:29–15:1, 20, 21) Soon thereafter, however, their viewpoint changed. They began to complain about their lot in life. Why? Because they shifted their focus from what Jehovah had done for them to the inconveniences of dwelling in the wilderness. They said to Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread and no water, and our soul has come to abhor the contemptible bread [manna].”—Num. 21:5.

Centuries later, King David of ancient Israel sang: “As for me, in your loving-kindness I have trusted; let my heart be joyful in your salvation. I will sing to Jehovah, for he has dealt rewardingly with me.” (Ps.

13:5, 6) David did not forget Jehovah’s acts of loving-kindness toward him. On the contrary, he regularly spent time thinking about them. (Ps. 103:2) Jehovah has dealt rewardingly with us too, and we are wise not to take for granted what he has done in our behalf. Let us, then, consider some of God’s blessings that we enjoy today.

## “Intimacy With Jehovah”

The psalmist sang: “The intimacy with Jehovah belongs to those fearful of him.” (Ps. 25:14) What a privilege it is for imperfect humans to have a close personal relationship with Jehovah! However, what if we become so preoccupied with the everyday affairs of life that we end up spending less time praying? Think of what will then happen to our good relationship with Jehovah. As our Friend, Jehovah expects us to trust



*We are blessed with spiritual support in times of trial*

in him and pour out our heart to him in prayer, expressing to him our fears, desires, and anxieties. (Prov. 3:5, 6; Phil. 4:6, 7) So should we not give consideration to the quality of our prayers?

When a young Witness named Paul thought about his prayers, he realized that he needed to make some improvements.\* He said, “I had fallen into the habit of using the same expressions repeatedly when I prayed to Jehovah.” As Paul did research on the subject in the *Watch Tower Publications Index*, he learned that there are about 180 prayers recorded in the Bible. In these, Jehovah’s servants of the past expressed their innermost feelings. Paul stated: “By meditating on such Scriptural examples, I learned to be specific in my prayers. This has helped me to open my heart to Jehovah. Now it is a delight to draw close to him in prayer.”

### “Food at the Proper Time”

Another blessing that Jehovah has bestowed upon us is the great body of Scriptural truth. As we feast on an abundance of rich spiritual food, we have reason to “cry out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart.” (Isa. 65:13, 14) However, we must be on guard against allowing unwholesome influences to cause us to lose our enthusiasm for the truth. For example, paying attention to apostate propaganda can becloud our thinking and blind us to the value of the spiritual “food at the proper time” made available by Jehovah through “the faithful and discreet slave.”—Matt. 24:45-47.

André, who had served Jehovah for years, had the bitter experience of being led astray

\* Names have been changed.



by apostate thinking. He felt that having a quick look at an apostate Web site would not be dangerous. He recalls: “Initially, I was attracted to the so-called truths that the apostates spoke of. The more I examined what they said, the more I came to think that I was justified in leaving Jehovah’s organization. But later, as I did some research on the apostates’ arguments against Jehovah’s Witnesses, I became aware of how crafty the false teachers were. Information taken out of context was their ‘strong evidence’ against us. Thus, I decided to start reading our publications again and to attend the meetings. Soon I realized how much I had missed.” Happily, André returned to the congregation.

### “The Whole Association of Brothers”

Our loving, united brotherhood is a blessing from Jehovah. (Ps. 133:1) With good reason, the apostle Peter wrote: “Have love for the whole association of brothers.” (1 Pet. 2: 17) Being part of the Christian brotherhood, we enjoy the warmth of supportive spiritual fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters of like faith.—Mark 10:29, 30.

Nevertheless, a variety of circumstances can sometimes cause a strain in our relationship with our brothers and sisters. For instance, it is easy to be annoyed at the imperfections of someone and to adopt a critical attitude toward that one. If this was to happen, would it not help to remember that Jehovah loves his servants in spite of their imperfections? Moreover, “if we make the statement: ‘We have no sin,’ we are misleading ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8) Should we not strive to “continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely”?—Col. 3:13.

A young person named Ann learned the value of Christian association the hard way. Acting somewhat like the prodigal son of Jesus’ illustration, she drifted away from the Christian congregation. Later on, she came to her senses and returned to the truth. (Luke 15:11-24) What did Ann learn from this experience? She relates: “Now that I have returned to Jehovah’s organization, I value all my brothers and sisters despite their imperfections. In the past, I was quick to be critical of them. But now I am determined not to allow anything to deprive me of the blessings that I enjoy among fellow believers. Nothing out there in the world is worth abandoning our spiritual paradise for.”

### **Always Be Grateful for Your Blessings**

Our hope in God’s Kingdom as the solution for all mankind’s problems is a treasure of inestimable value. When we first acquired this hope, how our hearts swelled with appreciation! We felt just like the merchant in Jesus’ parable who “sold all the things he had” in order to buy “one pearl of high value.” (Matt. 13:45, 46) Jesus did not say that the merchant ever lost apprecia-



tion for the pearl. Similarly, let us never lose appreciation for our wonderful hope.—1 Thess. 5:8; Heb. 6:19.

Consider the example of Jean, who has been serving Jehovah for more than 60 years. She says: “What has helped me to keep God’s Kingdom in mind is talking about it to others. When I see their eyes light up with an understanding of what the Kingdom is, it has a positive effect on me. Seeing the difference that Kingdom truth makes in the life of a Bible student causes me to think, ‘What wonderful truths I have to share with others!’ ”

We have sound reasons for being grateful for the many spiritual blessings we enjoy. Although we may be beset by such trials as opposition, sickness, old age, depression, bereavement, and economic hardship, we know that they are temporary. Under God’s Kingdom, physical blessings will be added to our spiritual blessings. Any suffering we now endure will be done away with in the new system of things.—Rev. 21:4.

In the meantime, let us count our spiritual blessings and display appreciation like that of the psalmist who sang: “Many things you yourself have done, O Jehovah my God, even your wonderful works and your thoughts toward us; there is none to be compared to you. Were I inclined to tell and speak of them, they have become more numerous than I can recount.”—Ps. 40:5.

# “To Obey Is Better Than a Sacrifice”

**T**HE first king of ancient Israel was Saul. Although chosen by the true God, Saul eventually became disobedient.

What wrongs did Saul commit? Could he have avoided them? How can we benefit from considering his example?

## **Jehovah Makes Known His Choice of King**

Before Saul became king, the prophet Samuel was serving as God’s representative in Israel. Now Samuel was old, and his sons were unfaithful. At the same time, the nation was being threatened by its enemies. When the older men of Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king over them who could judge them and lead them in battle, Jehovah directed the prophet to anoint Saul as leader and said: “He must save my people from the hand of the Philistines.”—1 Sam. 8:4-7, 20; 9:16.

Saul was “young and handsome.” His looks, though, were not his only recommendation. He was also humble. For example, Saul asked Samuel: “Am I not a Benjaminite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the most insignificant of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? So why have you spoken to me a thing like this?” Saul had a modest opinion of himself and his family, even though his father, Kish, was “mighty in wealth.”—1 Sam. 9:1, 2, 21.

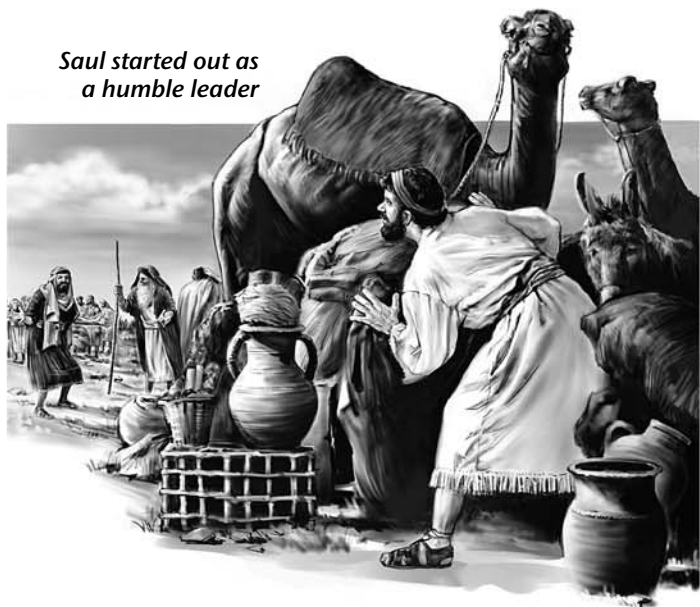
Consider also Saul’s response when Samuel made public Jehovah’s choice of Israel’s king. Samuel first anointed Saul in private and told him: “Do for yourself what your

hand finds possible, because the true God is with you.” Thereafter, the prophet called the people together to make Jehovah’s choice public. When Saul was identified, however, he could not be found. Bashful Saul was hiding. Jehovah indicated where he was, and Saul was proclaimed king.—1 Sam. 10:7, 20-24.

## **On the Battlefield**

Saul soon proved wrong any who may have doubted his qualifications. When the Ammonites threatened an Israelite town, “the spirit of God became operative upon Saul.” He authoritatively summoned the nation’s warriors, organized them, and then led them to victory. But Saul ascribed this

*Saul started out as  
a humble leader*





triumph to God, saying: "Today Jehovah has performed salvation in Israel."—1 Sam. 11: 1-13.

Saul had good qualities and God's blessing. He also acknowledged Jehovah's power. However, the continued success of the Israelites and their king depended on one very important factor. Samuel told the people of Israel: "If you will fear Jehovah and actually serve him and obey his voice, and you will not rebel against the order of Jehovah, both you and the king who must reign over you will certainly prove to be followers of Jehovah your God." What could the Israelites be sure of if they were faithful to God? "Jehovah will not desert his people for the sake of his great name," said Samuel, "because Jehovah has taken it upon himself to make you his people."—1 Sam. 12:14, 22.

Obedience was the key to having God's approval, and it still is. When Jehovah's servants obey his commands, he blesses them. But what if they disobey Jehovah?

### **"You Have Acted Foolishly"**

Saul's next action against the Philistines provoked a strong reaction from them. An army "like the grains of sand that are upon the seashore for multitude" rose against Saul. "The men of Israel themselves saw that they were in sore straits, because the people were hard pressed; and the people went hiding themselves in the caves and the hollows and the crags and the vaults and the water-pits." (1 Sam. 13:5, 6) What would Saul do?

Samuel had told Saul to meet him at Gilgal, where the prophet would offer sacrifices. Saul waited, but Samuel was late in coming, and Saul's army was scattering. So Saul took it upon himself to offer the sacrifices. As soon as he did so, Samuel arrived. After hearing what Saul had done, Samuel told him: "You have acted foolishly. You

have not kept the commandment of Jehovah your God that he commanded you, because, if you had, Jehovah would have made your kingdom firm over Israel to time indefinite. And now your kingdom will not last. Jehovah will certainly find for himself a man agreeable to his heart; and Jehovah will commission him as a leader over his people, because you did not keep what Jehovah commanded you."—1 Sam. 10:8; 13:8, 13, 14.

Lacking faith, Saul presumptuously chose to disobey God's command to wait for Samuel to come to offer the sacrifice. How Saul's course differed from that of Gideon, a former commander of Israelite armies! Jehovah directed Gideon to reduce his army from 32,000 to 300, and Gideon obeyed. Why? Because he had faith in Jehovah. With God's help, he defeated 135,000 invaders. (Judg. 7:1-7, 17-22; 8:10) Jehovah would have helped Saul too. Because of Saul's disobedience, however, the Philistines pillaged Israel.—1 Sam. 13:17, 18.

When faced with difficulties, how do we make decisions? From the point of view of those who lack faith, it might seem practical to ignore divine principles. In Samuel's absence, Saul may have thought that what he did was sensible. For those who are determined to have God's approval, though, following Scriptural principles that apply to the issue at hand is the only proper course to follow.

### **Jehovah Rejects Saul**

During a campaign against the Amalekites, Saul was guilty of another serious error. God had condemned the people of Amalek because of their unprovoked attack on the Israelites following the Exodus from Egypt. (Ex. 17:8; Deut. 25:17, 18) Moreover, the Amalekites joined others in attacking



***Why did Samuel tell Saul that “to obey is better than a sacrifice”?***

When Jehovah withdrew his holy spirit and blessing from Saul, “a bad spirit” began to dominate Israel’s first king. Saul’s disposition came to be characterized by suspicion and jealousy toward David—a man to whom Jehovah would later give the kingship. More than once, Saul tried to kill David. Seeing that “Jehovah was with David,” says the Bible, “Saul came to be an enemy of David always.” Saul tried to hunt him down and

God’s chosen people again during the times of the Judges. (Judg. 3:12, 13; 6:1-3, 33) So Jehovah called the Amalekites to account and commanded Saul to execute judgment upon them.—1 Sam. 15:1-3.

Instead of obeying Jehovah’s command to wipe out the hostile Amalekites and destroy their possessions, Saul captured their king and kept their best animals. What happened when Samuel challenged Saul in this regard? Saul tried to shift the blame by saying: “The people had compassion upon the best of the flock and of the herd, for the purpose of sacrificing to Jehovah.” Whether Saul really intended to sacrifice the animals or not, he had been disobedient. Saul was no longer so ‘little in his own eyes.’ Hence, God’s prophet pointed out that Saul had disobeyed God. Samuel then said: “Does Jehovah have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Look! To obey is better than a sacrifice . . . Since you have rejected the word of Jehovah, he accordingly rejects you from being king.”—1 Sam. 15:15, 17, 22, 23.

even ordered the death of 85 priests and others. No wonder Jehovah abandoned Saul! —1 Sam. 16:14; 18:11, 25, 28, 29; 19:10, 11; 20:32, 33; 22:16-19.

When the Philistines again attacked Israel, Saul turned to spiritism in a fruitless search for help. The next day, he was severely wounded in battle and committed suicide. (1 Sam. 28:4-8; 31:3, 4) Regarding Israel’s disobedient first king, the Scriptures state: “Saul died for his unfaithfulness with which he had acted faithlessly against Jehovah concerning the word of Jehovah that he had not kept and also for asking of a spirit medium to make inquiry. And he did not inquire of Jehovah.”—1 Chron. 10:13, 14.

Saul’s bad example clearly shows that obeying Jehovah is better than offering any sacrifice to him. “This is what the love of God means,” wrote the apostle John, “that we observe his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3) May we never neglect this fundamental truth: Lasting friendship with God depends on our obedience to him.

# LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH ALL YOUR HEART

*“You have loved righteousness.”—PS. 45:7.*

**B**Y MEANS OF his Word and his holy spirit, Jehovah is leading his people in “the tracks of righteousness.” (Ps. 23:3) Since we are imperfect, however, we tend to deviate from that path. To return to doing what is right calls for determined effort. What will help us to succeed? Like Jesus, we must *love* doing what is right.—**Read Psalm 45:7.**

<sup>2</sup> What are “the tracks of righteousness”? A track is a narrow footpath or trail. These “tracks” are determined by Jehovah’s standard of righteousness. In Hebrew and Greek, “righteousness” refers to that which is “upright,” implying a strict adherence to moral principles. Since Jehovah is “the abiding place of righteousness,” his worshippers are happy to look to him to determine the morally upright path that they should follow.—Jer. 50:7.

<sup>3</sup> Only by striving with all our heart to conform to God’s righteous standards will we be found fully pleasing to him. (Deut. 32:4) That begins with learning all we can about Jehovah God from his Word, the Bible. The more we learn about him, drawing closer to him every day, the more we will love his righteousness. (Jas. 4:8) We must also accept the guidance of God’s inspired Word when we are called upon to make important decisions in life.

1. What will help us to follow “the tracks of righteousness”?
2. What are “the tracks of righteousness”?
3. How can we learn more about God’s righteousness?

## Seek God’s Righteousness

<sup>4</sup> **Read Matthew 6:33.** Seeking God’s righteousness involves more than our spending time preaching the good news of the Kingdom. For our sacred service to be acceptable to Jehovah, our everyday conduct must harmonize with his high standards. What has to be done by all who are seeking Jehovah’s righteousness? They must “put on the new personality which was created according to God’s will in true righteousness and loyalty.”—Eph. 4:24.

<sup>5</sup> As we strive to live up to God’s righteous standards, we may sometimes become discouraged because of our shortcomings. What can help us to overcome debilitating discouragement and learn to love and practice righteousness? (Prov. 24:10) We must regularly approach Jehovah in prayer “with true hearts in the full assurance of faith.” (Heb. 10:19-22) Whether we are anointed Christians or we have an earthly hope, we exercise faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ and in his services as our great High Priest. (Rom. 5:8; Heb. 4:14-16) The effectiveness of Jesus’ shed blood was illustrated in the very first issue of this magazine. (1 John 1:6, 7) The article stated: “It is a singular fact, that [when] a scarlet or crimson object [is] viewed through a red glass in the *light*, the object *appears* white; so, though our sins be as scarlet or crimson, when we

4. What is involved in seeking God’s righteousness?
5. What will help us to overcome discouragement?

come where God will view them through the *blood* of Christ, they are accounted as *white*.” (July 1879, p. 6) What a marvelous provision Jehovah has made for us through the ransom sacrifice of his dear Son!—Isa. 1:18.

### Check Your Spiritual Armor

<sup>6</sup> At all times, we need to have on “the breastplate of righteousness,” for it is an essential part of the spiritual armor from God. (Eph. 6:11, 14) Whether we have recently dedicated ourselves to Jehovah or we already have decades of sacred service behind us, it is crucial that we check our spiritual armor every day. Why? Because the Devil and his demons have been cast down to the vicinity of the earth. (Rev. 12:7-12) Satan is angry, and he knows that his time is limited. Thus, he has intensified his attacks on God’s people. Do we appreciate the importance of having on “the breastplate of righteousness”?

6. Why is it crucial that we check our spiritual armor?



<sup>7</sup> A breastplate protects the physical heart. Because of our imperfect nature, our figurative heart tends to be treacherous and desperate. (Jer. 17:9) Since our heart is inclined to do what is wrong, it is vital that it be trained and disciplined. (Gen. 8:21) If we appreciate our need for “the breastplate of righteousness,” we will not temporarily remove it by choosing to be entertained by what God hates; nor will we allow ourselves to fantasize about engaging in wrongdoing. We will not squander large amounts of valuable time viewing television. Instead, we will keep struggling to do what is pleasing to Jehovah. Even if we were to stumble by momentarily giving in to unrighteous fleshly thinking, we would get up again with Jehovah’s help.—**Read Proverbs 24:16.**

<sup>8</sup> Among the parts of our spiritual armor is “the large shield of faith.” It enables us to “quench all the wicked one’s burning missiles.” (Eph. 6:16) In turn, faith and wholehearted love for Jehovah help us to practice righteousness and remain on the road to everlasting life. The more we learn to love Jehovah, the more we will value his righteousness. But what about our conscience? How does it help us in our efforts to love righteousness?

### Maintain a Good Conscience

<sup>9</sup> At our baptism, we made a request to Jehovah for “a good conscience.” (1 Pet. 3:21) Because we exercise faith in the ransom, the blood of Jesus covers our sins and we thus enjoy a clean standing before God. To remain in a saved condition, however, we need to maintain a good conscience. If our conscience at times accuses us and sounds

7. How will we conduct ourselves if we appreciate our need for “the breastplate of righteousness”?

8. Why do we need “the large shield of faith”?

9. How do we benefit from maintaining a good conscience?



warnings, we should be grateful that it is working properly. Such proddings indicate that our conscience has not become seared with respect to Jehovah's righteous ways. (1 Tim. 4:2) But the conscience can play an additional role for those wanting to love righteousness.

<sup>10</sup> When we do what is wrong, our conscience may condemn or torment us. One youth strayed from "the tracks of righteousness." He became addicted to pornography and started smoking marijuana. He felt guilty when he went to the meetings and felt like a hypocrite when he shared in the field service, so he stopped participating in these Christian activities. "But," he stated, "little did I know that my conscience would hold me accountable for my actions." He added, "My stupidity lasted for about four years." Then he started to think about returning to the truth. Although he thought that Jehovah would not listen to his prayer, he prayed anyway and asked for forgiveness. Less than ten minutes later, his mother visited him and encouraged him to return to the meetings. He went to the Kingdom Hall and asked an elder to study with him. In time, he was baptized, and he is thankful to Jehovah for saving his life.

<sup>11</sup> Have we not found that great pleasure can be derived from doing what is right? As we learn to love righteousness and practice it more fully, we will find more joy in doing what pleases our heavenly Father. And just think! The day is coming when all humans will experience only feelings of pleasure from their conscience; they will perfectly reflect God's image. Let us, therefore, now implant a love of righteousness deep in our

10, 11. (a) Relate an experience that shows why we should heed our Bible-trained conscience. (b) Why can a love of righteousness bring us great pleasure?



***A trained conscience helps us to resolve employment questions***

heart and cause Jehovah to rejoice.—Prov. 23:15, 16.

<sup>12</sup> What can we do to train our conscience? When we study the Scriptures and our Bible-based publications, it is important to remember that "the heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer." (Prov. 15:28) Consider how this proves beneficial when we face questions regarding employment. If a certain type of work is plainly in conflict with Scriptural requirements, most of us quickly respond to the direction provided through the faithful and discreet slave class. When the answer to an employment question is not clear-cut, however, Bible principles should be noted and considered prayerfully.\* This applies to such principles as the need to avoid offending the consciences of others. (1 Cor. 10:31-33) Especially should we be concerned with principles involving our relationship with God.

\* For a discussion of Bible principles related to employment questions, see *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1999, pages 28-30.

12, 13. How can we train our conscience?

If Jehovah is real to us, we will primarily ask ourselves, ‘Would my doing this work make Jehovah feel hurt, causing him pain?’—Ps. 78:40, 41.

<sup>13</sup> When preparing for the *Watchtower* Study or the Congregation Bible Study, we ought to bear in mind the need to meditate on the information presented. Do we find ourselves always quickly underlining the answer to a study question and moving on to the next paragraph? Such study sessions are unlikely to deepen our love for righteousness or to develop within us a sensitive conscience. If we are to come to love righteousness, we need to study diligently and meditate on what we read in God’s written Word. There are no shortcuts when it comes to learning to love righteousness with all our heart!

### Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

<sup>14</sup> Jehovah God and Jesus Christ want us to be happy as we perform our sacred service. What will contribute to our happiness? Why, a love of righteousness! In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated: “Happy are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, since they will be filled.” (Matt. 5:6) What significance do these words have for those who have a desire to love righteousness?

<sup>15</sup> The world we live in is ruled by the wicked one. (1 John 5:19) If we pick up a newspaper in any country, we find reports of cruelty and violence on an unprecedented scale. Man’s inhumanity to man is troubling for a righteous person to contemplate. (Eccl. 8:9) As those who love Jehovah, we know that only he can satisfy the spiritual hunger

14. How do Jehovah God and Jesus Christ want us to feel about our sacred service?

15, 16. In what ways can spiritual hunger and thirst be satisfied?

and thirst of individuals desiring to learn righteousness. The ungodly will soon be removed, and lovers of righteousness will no longer experience the distress caused by law-defying people and their evil deeds. (2 Pet. 2: 7, 8) What a relief that will be!

<sup>16</sup> As Jehovah’s servants and followers of Jesus Christ, we realize that all those hungering and thirsting for righteousness “will be filled.” They will be fully satisfied through God’s arrangement of the new heavens and the new earth in which “righteousness is to dwell.” (2 Pet. 3:13) So let us not lose heart or be amazed that oppression and violence have taken away righteousness in this satanic world. (Eccl. 5:8) Jehovah, the Most High, knows what is taking place and will soon deliver lovers of righteousness.

### Benefit From Loving Righteousness

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 146:8 emphasizes an outstanding benefit of following the path of righteousness. The psalmist sang: “Jehovah is loving the righteous ones.” Just imagine! The Sovereign of the universe loves us for loving righteousness! Because of Jehovah’s love, we are confident that he will provide for us as we keep Kingdom interests first in our life. (*Read Psalm 37:25; Proverbs 10:3.*) Eventually, this entire planet will be enjoyed by lovers of righteousness. (Prov. 13:22) For most

17. What are some of the benefits that come from loving righteousness?

### How Would You Answer?

- Why is appreciation for the ransom necessary in order to love righteousness?
- Why is it vital that we wear “the breastplate of righteousness”?
- How can we train our conscience?

of God's people, the reward for having practiced righteousness will be overwhelming joy and life without end in a beautiful earthly paradise. Even now, those who love God's righteousness are rewarded with an inner peace that contributes to harmony in their families and in their congregations.—Phil. 4: 6, 7.

<sup>18</sup> As we await the arrival of the great day of Jehovah, we must continue to seek his righteousness. (Zeph. 2:2, 3) Let us, therefore, manifest a genuine love for Jehovah God's upright ways. That includes keeping "the breastplate of righteousness" firmly in place to protect our figurative heart. We also need to maintain a good conscience—one that will bring pleasure to us and cause the heart of our God to rejoice.—Prov. 27:11.

18. What positive things can we do as we await Jehovah's day?

<sup>19</sup> Jehovah's "eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him." (2 Chron. 16:9) How comforting those words are to us as we do what is right in the face of increasing instability, violence, and wickedness in this troubled world! True, our righteous ways may be puzzling to the masses of mankind alienated from God. But we benefit ourselves greatly by adhering to Jehovah's righteousness. (Isa. 48:17; 1 Pet. 4:4) So, then, with a complete heart, let us be determined to continue finding enjoyment in loving and practicing righteousness with all our heart. However, having a complete heart also includes hating lawlessness. The following article will show us what this means.

19. What should we be determined to do, and what will be discussed in the next article?

## DO YOU HATE LAWLESSNESS?

*"You [Jesus] hated lawlessness."*—HEB. 1:9.

**S**TRESSING the importance of love, Jesus Christ told his disciples: "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:34, 35) Jesus commanded his followers to show self-sacrificing love toward one another. That love would be their identifying mark. Jesus also exhorted them: "Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you."—Matt. 5:44.

1. What did Jesus teach regarding love?

<sup>2</sup> In addition to teaching his disciples about love, however, Jesus taught them what to hate. It was said with reference to Jesus: "You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness [wickedness]." (Heb. 1:9; Ps. 45:7) This shows that we must develop not only a love of righteousness but also a hatred of sin, or lawlessness. It is noteworthy that the apostle John specifically stated: "Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, and so sin is lawlessness."—1 John 3:4.

2. Followers of Christ should develop a hatred for what?

<sup>3</sup> As Christians, then, we do well to ask ourselves, ‘Do I hate lawlessness?’ Let us examine how we can show our hatred for what is bad in the following four areas of life: (1) our attitude toward the abuse of alcohol, (2) our view of the occult, (3) our reaction to immorality, and (4) our view of those who love lawlessness.

### Keep Alcohol in Its Place

<sup>4</sup> Jesus occasionally drank wine, recognizing it as a gift from God. (Ps. 104:14, 15) However, he never abused this gift by indulging in heavy drinking. (Prov. 23:29-33) Jesus thus had freeness of speech when counseling against such a practice. (***Read Luke 21:34.***) Misuse of alcohol can lead to other serious sins. Thus, the apostle Paul wrote: “Do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but keep getting filled with spirit.” (Eph. 5:18) He also admonished the aged women in the congregation not to be “enslaved to a lot of wine.” —Titus 2:3.

3. With regard to hatred for lawlessness, what areas of life will this article consider?

4. Why did Jesus enjoy freeness of speech when warning about heavy drinking?

*If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, what should you consider?*



<sup>5</sup> If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, you would also do well to ask yourself: ‘Do I share Jesus’ attitude toward heavy drinking? If I need to counsel others on this matter, do I have freeness of speech? Do I drink to escape worries or to ease stress? How much alcohol do I consume each week? How do I react when someone implies that I might be drinking too much? Do I become defensive or even resentful?’ Allowing ourselves to become enslaved to a lot of wine can affect our ability to reason things out properly and to make wise decisions. Followers of Christ strive to safeguard their thinking ability.—Prov. 3:21, 22.

### Avoid Occult Practices

<sup>6</sup> While on earth, Jesus firmly opposed Satan and the demons. He rejected Satan’s direct attacks on his loyalty. (Luke 4:1-13) He also identified and resisted subtle attempts to influence his thinking and actions. (Matt. 16:21-23) Jesus helped deserving ones to escape cruel domination by the demons. —Mark 5:2, 8, 12-15; 9:20, 25-27.

<sup>7</sup> After Jesus’ enthronement as King in 1914, he cleansed the heavens of the contaminating influence of Satan and the demons. As a result, Satan is—now more than ever—bent on “misleading the entire inhabited earth.” (Rev. 12:9, 10) It should come as no surprise to us, then, that fascination with the occult is widespread and is growing. What measures can we take to protect ourselves?

<sup>8</sup> The Bible clearly warns of the dangers connected with spiritism. (***Read***

5. What questions might those who choose to drink alcoholic beverages ask themselves?

6, 7. (a) How did Jesus deal with Satan and the demons? (b) Why are occult practices so widespread today?

8. What self-examination may be in order concerning our choice of entertainment?





**Deuteronomy 18:10-12.)** Today, Satan and the demons influence people's thinking through movies, books, and electronic games that promote occult practices. When selecting entertainment, therefore, each of us should ask himself: 'Over the past months, have I chosen to be entertained by films, TV programs, electronic games, books, or comics that feature uncanny practices? Do I understand the importance of rejecting occult influences, or do I downplay these dangers? Have I even considered how Jehovah might feel about my choice of entertainment? If I have opened the door to such satanic influences, will my love for Jehovah and his righteous principles impel me to act decisively and slam that door shut?'—Acts 19:19, 20.

### Heed Jesus' Warning About Immorality

<sup>9</sup> Jesus upheld Jehovah's standard of sexual morality. He said: "Did you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh'? So that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what

9. How might a person nurture the love of lawlessness?

God has yoked together let no man put apart." (Matt. 19:4-6) Jesus knew that what we take in through our eyes can affect our heart. In his Sermon on the Mount, he therefore stated: "You heard that it was said, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:27, 28) Those who ignore Jesus' warning are in reality nurturing the love of lawlessness.

<sup>10</sup> Satan promotes sexual immorality by means of pornography. The present system of things is awash with it. Those who view pornography find it difficult to erase the immoral scenes from their minds. They can even become addicted to pornography. Consider what happened to one Christian. He says: "I secretly viewed pornography. I created a fantasy world that I thought was disconnected from the world where I served Jehovah. I knew that this practice was wrong but told myself that my service to God was still acceptable." What changed this brother's thinking? He states: "Although it was the most difficult thing I have ever done, I decided to tell the elders about my problem." This brother eventually broke free from this degrading habit. "After I cleansed my life of this sin," he admits, "I finally felt that I had a truly clean conscience." Those who hate lawlessness must learn to hate pornography.

<sup>11</sup> Music and its accompanying lyrics can strongly influence our emotions and, therefore, our figurative heart. Music itself is a gift from God and has long held a place in true worship. (Ex. 15:20, 21; Eph. 5:19) But Satan's wicked world promotes music that glo-

10. Relate an experience showing that an individual can break free from pornography.

11, 12. How can we show hatred for lawlessness when it comes to our choice of music?



### *A viewer of pornography nurtures love for what?*

heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will. Many will say to me in that day [when God executes judgment], ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?’ ” However, he will reject those who unrepentantly practice lawlessness, saying: “Get away from me.” (Matt. 7:21-23) Why such a judgment? Because such individuals dishonor God and cause harm to others by their lawless practices.

<sup>14</sup> God’s Word commands that unrepentant sinners be removed from the congregation. (***Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13.***) This is necessary for at least three reasons: (1) to keep Jehovah’s name free from reproach, (2) to protect the congregation from contamination, and (3) to help the sinner come to repentance if possible.

<sup>15</sup> Do we share Jesus’ view of those who have become set in their lawless course? We need to give thought to these questions: ‘Would I choose to associate regularly with someone who has been disfellowshipped or who has disassociated himself from the Christian congregation? What if that one is a close relative who no longer lives at home?’ Such a situation can be a real test of our love of righteousness and of our loyalty to God.\*

<sup>16</sup> Consider the experience of a sister

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\* For a detailed discussion of this subject, see the September 15, 1981, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 26-31.

14. Why are unrepentant sinners removed from the congregation?

15. Loyalty to Jehovah calls for an answer to what searching questions?

16, 17. What difficulty did a Christian mother face, and what helped her to uphold the arrangement for disfellowshipping unrepentant wrongdoers?

rifies immorality. (1 John 5:19) How can you tell whether the music you listen to is defiling you or not?

<sup>12</sup> You might start by asking yourself: ‘Do the songs I listen to glorify murder, adultery, fornication, and blasphemy? If I were to read the lyrics of certain songs to someone, would that person get the impression that I hate lawlessness, or would the words indicate that my heart is defiled?’ We cannot hate lawlessness in word while glorifying it in song. “The things proceeding out of the mouth come out of the heart,” said Jesus, “and those things defile a man. For example, out of the heart come wicked reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornications, thieveries, false testimonies, blasphemies.”—Matt. 15:18, 19; compare James 3:10, 11.

### **Adopt Jesus’ View of Those Who Love Lawlessness**

<sup>13</sup> Jesus said that he came to call sinners, or lawless ones, to repentance. (Luke 5:30-32) How, though, did he view those who became hardened in a course of sin? Jesus gave strong warnings against being influenced by such ones. (Matt. 23:15, 23-26) He also clearly stated: “Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of the

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13. How did Jesus view those who became hardened in sin?

whose adult son at one time had love for Jehovah. Later in life, however, he unrepentantly chose to practice lawlessness. Hence, he was disfellowshipped from the congregation. Our sister loved Jehovah, but she also loved her son and found it extremely difficult to apply the Scriptural command to avoid associating with him.

<sup>17</sup> What advice would you have given this sister? An elder helped her to realize that Jehovah understood the pain she felt. The brother invited her to think about the pain Jehovah must have experienced when some of his angelic sons rebelled. The elder reasoned with her that even though Jehovah knows how painful such a circumstance can be, he requires that unrepentant sinners be disfellowshipped. She took the reminders to heart and loyally upheld the disfellowshipping arrangement.\* Such loyalty makes Jehovah's heart glad.—Prov. 27:11.

<sup>18</sup> If you face a similar situation, please remember that Jehovah sympathizes with you. By cutting off contact with the disfellowshipped or disassociated one, you are showing that you hate the attitudes and actions that led to that outcome. However, you are also showing that you love the wrongdoer enough to do what is best for him or her. Your loyalty to Jehovah may increase the likelihood that the disciplined one will repent and return to Jehovah.

<sup>19</sup> One individual who was disfellowshipped and was later reinstated wrote: "I am happy that Jehovah loves his people enough to see that his organization is kept clean. What may seem harsh to outsiders

is both necessary and really a loving thing to do." Do you think that this person would have been helped to come to such a conclusion had members of the congregation, including her family, maintained regular contact with her while she was disfellowshipped? Our supporting the Scriptural arrangement of disfellowshipping gives evidence that we love righteousness and recognize Jehovah's right to set standards of conduct.

### **"Hate What Is Bad"**

<sup>20</sup> "Keep your senses, be watchful," warns the apostle Peter. Why? Because "your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (1 Pet. 5:8) Will that someone be you? Much depends on how well you learn to hate lawlessness.

<sup>21</sup> Developing a hatred for what is bad is not easy. We are born in sin, and we live in a world that caters to fleshly desires. (1 John 2:15-17) By imitating Jesus Christ and developing deep love for Jehovah God, however, we can succeed in cultivating hatred for lawlessness. Let us be determined to "hate what is bad," fully confident that Jehovah "is guarding . . . his loyal ones; out of the hand of the wicked ones he delivers them."—Ps. 97:10.

20, 21. Why is it important to learn to hate lawlessness?

### **How Would You Answer?**

- What will help us to examine our attitude toward alcoholic beverages?
- What protective measures can we take against occult practices?
- Why is pornography dangerous?
- How do we display hatred for lawlessness when someone we love is disfellowshipped?

\* See also the January 15, 2007, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 17-20.

18, 19. (a) Cutting off contact with a practicer of lawlessness gives evidence of our hatred for what? (b) What may result when we are loyal to God and his arrangement?