

# THE WATCHTOWER

## ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



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## GERMANY

**COVER:** Street witnessing in a public square in Frankfurt, Germany

POPULATION

81,751,600

WITNESSES

162,705

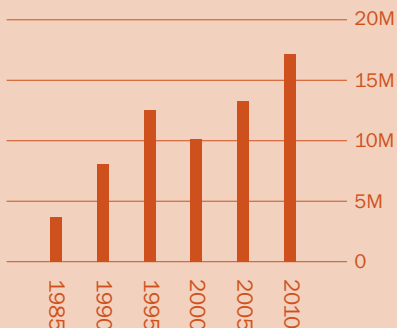
BIBLE STUDIES

74,466

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE IN 2012

265,407

TOTAL (IN MILLIONS) BOOKS PRINTED BY THE GERMANY BRANCH FOR THE LAST 25 YEARS



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

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## STUDY ARTICLES

- **Appreciate Jehovah's Qualities to the Full**
- **Appreciate Jehovah's Generosity and Reasonableness**
- **Appreciate Jehovah's Loyalty and Forgiveness**

Many Christians think of Jehovah as having four principal attributes. But these three articles will deepen our appreciation for several qualities of Jehovah that are studied less often. In the case of each quality, we will consider the questions: What is its meaning? How does Jehovah demonstrate it? And how can we imitate Jehovah in showing it?

- **Let Jehovah's Discipline Mold You**

Describing Jehovah's sovereign authority over humans in an illustrative way, the Scriptures refer to Jehovah as "our Potter." (Isa. 64:8) This article shows what we can learn about the Great Potter from the way he has molded individuals and nations in times past. It also discusses how we may benefit from his molding today.

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June 15, 2013

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“What a wonderful lesson we learn from Noah!” explained my father. “Noah obeyed Jehovah and loved his family, and they all survived the Flood because all the family went into the ark.”

THAT is one of the earliest memories I have of my father, a modest, hardworking man. He had a strong sense of justice, so he was immediately attracted to the Bible’s message when he heard it in 1953. From then on, he did his best to pass on to us children what he was learning. My mother was initially reluctant to leave her Catholic traditions. But in time, she too started to make Bible teachings her own.

It was difficult for my parents to study with us. Mother was almost illiterate, and Father worked long and hard in the fields. Sometimes he was so tired that he could not stay awake during the study. His efforts paid off, though. I was the eldest child, so I helped to teach my sister and two brothers. That included something that Father often mentioned—Noah’s love for his family, shown by his obedience to God. How I loved this Bible account! Before long, we were all attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall in Roseto degli Abruzzi, a city on the Adriatic coast of Italy.

I was just 11 years old in 1955 when my mother and I crossed over the mountains to the west to attend our first convention, in Rome. Since then, I have considered these large gatherings one of the most beautiful parts of Christian life.

The following year, I got baptized and soon thereafter entered the full-time service. When I was 17 years old, I became a special pioneer in Latina, south of Rome and about 190 miles (300 km) from home. It was a fairly new city, so nobody worried too much about what the neighbors might think. My pioneer partner and I were thrilled to distribute a lot of Bible literature, but being rather young, how I missed home! Still, I wanted to obey the direction I had been given.

I was later assigned to Milan to help with preparations for the 1963 “Everlasting Good News” International Assembly. During the convention, I worked as a volunteer along with many others, including Paolo Piccioli, a young

## Obeying Jehovah Has Brought Me Many Blessings

AS TOLD BY

ELISA PICCIOLI







Our wedding day



We enjoyed spending time with young ones, which for Paolo usually meant playing soccer

brother from Florence. On the second day of the convention, he gave a stirring talk on singleness. I remember thinking, 'That brother will certainly never get married.' However, we started writing to each other, and it became clear that we had a lot in common—our goals, our love for Jehovah, and our strong desire to obey him. Paolo and I got married in 1965.

### ENCOUNTERS WITH CLERGYMEN

I was a regular pioneer in Florence for ten years. It was exciting to see the growth in the congregations, particularly seeing how the young ones progressed. Paolo and I enjoyed spending time with them in spiritual conversations as well as in recreation, which for Paolo usually meant playing soccer. Understandably, I appreciated having time with my husband, but I could see that those young ones and the families in the congregation needed and benefited from his kind interest and time.

It still brings me joy to think back on the many Bible studies we were able to conduct. One study was with Adriana, who spoke to two other families about what she was learning. They arranged a meeting with a priest to discuss such church doctrines as the Trinity and the immortal soul.

Three prelates turned up at the meeting. Their explanations were convoluted and inconsistent, which our Bible students easily recognized when they compared such with the Bible's clear teachings. Yes, that meeting proved to be a turning point. In time, some 15 members of those families became Witnesses.

Of course, nowadays our preaching methods are quite different. Back then, Paolo became an "expert" at encounters with priests—and he had a number of those encounters. I remember one held before an audience of non-Witnesses. It became clear that opposers had arranged ahead of time for some in the audience to ask what were considered awkward questions. However, the conversation took a turn. Someone asked whether it was right for the church to meddle in politics, as it had done for centuries. At that point, it was clear that the priests were in trouble. Suddenly, the lights went out, and the meeting was called off. Years later we learned that the black-out had been planned in case the conversation did not go exactly as the priests had hoped.

### NEW AVENUES OF SERVICE

After Paolo and I had been married for ten years, we were invited to serve in the circuit

work. Paolo had a good job, so it was not an easy decision. But after prayerful thought, we made ourselves available for that new avenue of service. We enjoyed spending time with the families who hosted us. In the evening, we often studied as a group, and then Paolo helped the children with their homework, especially if it was mathematics. Furthermore, Paolo was an avid reader and enthusiastically shared interesting and upbuilding things he had read about. On Monday, we often went to preach in towns where there were no Witnesses, inviting people to a talk planned for the evening.

After only two years in the circuit work, we were invited to serve at Bethel in Rome. Paolo was to care for legal matters, and I was assigned to the Magazine Department. Making the change was not easy, but we were determined to be obedient. It was exciting to see the gradual expansion of the branch and the enormous growth of the brotherhood in Italy. During that time, Jehovah's Witnesses in Italy obtained important legal recognition. We certainly were happy in this type of service.

While we were serving at Bethel, our Bible-based stand on blood came to the fore in Italy. In the early 1980's, there was a legal case on this is-

sue that caused quite a stir. A couple who were Witnesses were falsely accused of causing their daughter's death, though she actually died as a result of a serious blood disorder inherited by many in the Mediterranean region. Brothers and sisters in the Bethel family assisted the lawyers who represented the Christian parents. A leaflet and a special edition of *Awake!* helped people to get the facts and to understand correctly what God's Word says about blood. During those months, Paolo often worked up to 16 hours a day without stopping. I did my best to support him in his important efforts.

### ANOTHER LIFE CHANGE

We had been married for 20 years when we faced an unexpected turn of events. I was 41 years old and Paolo was 49 when I told him that I thought I was pregnant. In his diary, I found these words in the entry for that day: "Prayer: If it is true, help us stay in the full-time service, not relax spiritually, and help us to be good parents by our example. Above all, help me put into practice at least 1 percent of all that I have said from the platform over the past 30 years." Judging from the result, Jehovah must have answered his prayer—and mine.



Paolo loved his work at Bethel  
Ilaria often said, "Dad is my best friend"





The birth of Ilaria brought on huge changes in our lives. Honestly, we had moments of discouragement, even as Proverbs 24:10 mentioned: “Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty.” But we supported each other, remembering the value of mutual encouragement.

Ilaria is quick to say how happy she is to have been born to two Witnesses who were busy in the full-time service. She has never felt neglected; she grew up in a totally normal family. During the day, I was there for her. In the evening when Paolo got home, he often had work to finish; yet, he spent time with her, playing with her and helping her with homework. He did so even though it meant that he might be up until two or three in the morning to finish his own work. Ilaria often said, “Dad is my best friend.”

As you can imagine, it took consistency—and sometimes firmness—to help Ilaria stay on the Christian path. I recall one occasion when she was playing with a friend but behaved badly. We explained from the Bible why she should not behave that way. We also had her apologize to her friend in our presence.

Ilaria readily says that she appreciates the love for the ministry that her parents displayed. Now

that she is married, she understands even more fully how important it is to obey Jehovah and follow his guidance.

### OBEDIENT EVEN IN MOMENTS OF SADNESS

In 2008, Paolo learned that he had cancer. At first it seemed that Paolo would be able to survive the illness, and he encouraged me greatly. In addition to seeking the best medical advice available, together with Ilaria we turned to Jehovah in long prayers, asking for his help to face the future. Still, I watched a man who once had been so strong and dynamic gradually weaken. His death in 2010 was a tremendous blow. I take considerable comfort, though, in what was accomplished in the 45 years we were together. We gave Jehovah our best. I know that our work will have lasting value. And I eagerly look forward to Paolo’s being resurrected, in line with Jesus’ words at John 5: 28, 29.

Deep down, I’m still that little girl so in love with the story of Noah. My determination has not changed. I want to obey Jehovah, no matter what is asked. I am certain that any obstacles, sacrifices, or losses are relatively small compared to the wonderful blessings that our loving God bestows. I have personally experienced this—and I assure you, it is worth it.

“Deep down, I’m still that little girl so in love with the story of Noah. My determination has not changed”





*“Become imitators of God, as beloved children.”—EPH. 5:1.*

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#### WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER?

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How can we deepen our appreciation for Jehovah’s qualities?

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What makes someone approachable?

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How can we imitate Jehovah’s impartiality?

## APPRECIATE JEHOVAH’S QUALITIES TO THE FULL

WHEN you think of Jehovah’s personality, what qualities come to mind? Many of us think of love, justice, wisdom, and power. Yet, we realize that Jehovah possesses many endearing qualities. In fact, a list could be made of more than 40 different qualities of Jehovah, each of which has been discussed in our publications. Just imagine what a treasure of fascinating facts about Jehovah’s personality is waiting to be discovered through our personal or family study! In what ways can we benefit from such a study? It can deepen our appreciation for our heavenly Father. In turn, the deeper our appreciation for Jehovah, the stronger our desire to draw close to him and to imitate him.—Josh. 23:8; Ps. 73:28.

<sup>2</sup> What, however, does it mean to “appreciate” something? As we will use the word here, it means to recognize the proper value of something. Appreciation may deepen gradually. To illustrate: Our appreciation for a new dish becomes deeper as we first smell its aroma, then savor each morsel of it, and finally prepare the dish ourselves. Similarly, we deepen our appreciation for a quality of Jehovah by getting acquainted with it, reflecting on it, and then imitating it in our own life. (Eph. 5:1) The objective of this article and the following two articles is to deepen our appreciation for God’s qualities that we may think of less often than his principal attributes. In the case of each, we will consider: What is its meaning? How does Jehovah demonstrate it? And how can we imitate Jehovah in showing this particular quality?

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1. (a) What qualities of Jehovah might a Christian consider? (b) How will we benefit from examining God’s qualities?
  2. (a) Illustrate how we may deepen our appreciation for Jehovah’s qualities. (b) What will we be considering?



"Jehovah your God . . . treats none with partiality."—Deut. 10:17  
(See paragraph 17)

"Jehovah is near to all those calling upon him."  
—Ps. 145:18  
(See paragraph 9)

### JEHOVAH IS APPROACHABLE

<sup>3</sup> Let us first take up the quality of approachableness. How would you describe an individual who is approachable? You might say, 'Someone who is kind, readily available, and easy to talk to.' You can often discern whether a person is approachable or not by listening to what he says and by observing his body language—gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbal signs.

<sup>4</sup> How does Jehovah demonstrate that he is approachable? Although he is the almighty Creator of our vast universe, Jehovah assures us that he is willing and eager to listen to our prayers and to respond to them. (*Read Psalm 145:18; Isaiah 30:18, 19.*) We can speak to God at length at any time or place. We can approach him freely, knowing that he will never reproach us for doing so. (Ps. 65:2;

3, 4. (a) How would you describe someone who is approachable? (b) How does Jehovah assure us that he is approachable?

Jas. 1:5) God's Word describes Jehovah in human terms to indicate that he wants to be approached. For instance, the psalmist David wrote that "the eyes of Jehovah are toward" us and that his "right hand keeps fast hold" on us. (Ps. 34:15; 63:8) The prophet Isaiah likened Jehovah to a shepherd, saying: "With his arm he will collect together the lambs; and in his bosom he will carry them." (Isa. 40:11) Just imagine! Jehovah wants us to be as close to him as a little lamb nestled in the bosom of a caring shepherd. What an approachable Father we have! How can we imitate Jehovah in this regard?

### A HIGHLY VALUED QUALITY

<sup>5</sup> Not long ago, zealous Witnesses living on different continents were asked, "Which quality do you value most in an elder?" The overwhelming majority an-

5. Why is it important for elders to be approachable?



swered, “Being approachable.” Granted, each Christian needs to develop that quality to the full, but it is especially important for elders to be approachable. (Isa. 32:1, 2) Commenting on a reason why she felt that this quality is so important, one sister noted: “Only if an elder is approachable will we be able to benefit from any other fine qualities he may have.” Do you see the logic of that observation? But what makes a person approachable?

<sup>6</sup> A key to being approachable is showing genuine interest in others. If an elder cares about others and is willing to give of himself in their behalf, his brothers and sisters, including young ones, will likely sense this attitude. (Mark 10:13-16) Says 12-year-old Carlos: “I watch the elders in the hall smiling and being kind, and I like that about them.” Of course, it is not enough for an elder to *say* that he is approachable; he should manifest that quality. (1 John 3:18) How can he do that?

<sup>7</sup> Think of this comparison. Not long ago, a brother wore his convention badge when traveling home by airplane after attending a convention abroad. When the flight attendant saw the badge with the words “Let God’s Kingdom Come!” he said to the brother, “Yes, let it come—we have to talk some more about this.” Later, they had a conversation, and the attendant gladly accepted our magazines. Many of us have had similar experiences. Now, why does a convention badge often trigger a conversation? Because in a sense, it tells people: “Feel free to approach me. Ask me where I’m going.” The badge is a visible sign that

lets people know that we are willing to share our beliefs. Similarly, Christian elders want to give visible signs that tell their fellow believers: “Feel free to approach me.” What are some of those signs?

<sup>8</sup> Customs may vary from land to land, but usually when we give our brothers and sisters a warm smile, a welcoming handshake, a relaxed greeting, we are signaling that we are genuinely interested in them. Who should take the initiative in this? Note the example Jesus set. Matthew reports that at a meeting with his disciples, “Jesus approached and spoke to them.” (Matt. 28:18) Likewise, elders today take the initiative to approach their fellow believers and speak to them. How can that affect the congregation? An 88-year-old pioneer sister observed: “The warm smiles and encouraging comments I receive from the elders when I enter the Kingdom Hall endear them to me.” Another faithful sister added: “It may be viewed as a little thing, but when an elder welcomes me to the meeting with a smile, it means a lot to me.”

### APPROACHABLE AND AVAILABLE

<sup>9</sup> Obviously, we cannot be approached if we are not available. Jehovah sets a fine example in that regard. “He is not far off from each one of us.” (Acts 17:27) One way in which elders make themselves available to others is by setting aside time before and after Christian meetings to converse with their brothers and sisters—young and

6. What is a key to being approachable?

7. Why does wearing a convention badge often trigger a conversation, and what lesson can we learn from that?

8. How do elders signal their genuine interest in others, and how does that affect the congregation?

9, 10. (a) What fine example does Jehovah set? (b) How can elders make themselves available to others?



The daughters of Zelophehad appreciated God's impartiality  
(See paragraphs 13, 14)

old. A pioneer brother noted: "When an elder asks how I'm doing and then stops to listen to my answer, I feel appreciated." A sister who has been serving Jehovah for nearly 50 years commented: "Elders who take some time to talk to me after the meeting make me feel valued."

<sup>10</sup> Understandably, Christian shepherds also need to care for other duties. It should be a goal at meetings, though, first to give attention to the sheep.

### JEHOVAH IS IMPARTIAL

<sup>11</sup> Impartiality is another of Jehovah's endearing qualities. What does it mean to be impartial? It involves being fair, free from having or showing bias or favoritism. Genuine impartiality has two elements: attitude and actions. Why are both needed? Because only if someone

**11, 12.** (a) What is involved in being impartial? (b) How is Jehovah an example for us as to impartiality?

is impartial in his outlook will he be moved to *treat* all with impartiality. In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the expression "not partial" literally means not a "taker of faces," that is, not favoring one face over another. (Acts 10:34; *Kingdom Interlinear*) Hence, one who is impartial will pay due regard, not to an individual's outward appearance or circumstances, but to his or her character as a person.

<sup>12</sup> Jehovah is the greatest example of impartiality. His Word states that he "is not partial" and that he "treats none with partiality." (***Read Acts 10:34, 35; Deuteronomy 10:17.***) A situation that arose in Moses' day demonstrates that.

<sup>13</sup> Just before the Israelites were to enter the Promised Land, five unmarried fleshly sisters faced a dilemma. What was it? They knew that their family, like other Israelite families, would receive a piece of land that had been allotted to their father. (Num. 26:52-55) However, their father, Zelophehad of the tribe of Manasseh, had died. According to custom, the right to take possession of the land would be passed to Zelophehad's sons, but he had only daughters. (Num. 26:33) With no son in the family to receive the land, would the family's land be handed to relatives and the daughters be left without a family inheritance?

<sup>14</sup> The five sisters approached Moses and asked him: "Why should the name of our father be taken away from the midst of his family because he had no son?" They pleaded: "O give us a possession in the midst of our father's brothers." Did Moses react by saying, "There are no exceptions to the rule"? No, he

**13, 14.** (a) The five daughters of Zelophehad faced what situation? (b) How did Jehovah demonstrate impartiality?

“presented their case before Jehovah.” (Num. 27:2-5) What was the response? Jehovah told Moses: “The daughters of Zelophehad are speaking right. By all means you should give them the possession of an inheritance in the midst of their father’s brothers, and you must cause their father’s inheritance to pass to them.” Jehovah went further. He turned the exception into a rule, instructing Moses: “In case any man should die without his having a son, you must then cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter.” (Num. 27:6-8; Josh. 17:1-6) From then on, all Israelite women who faced the same plight would be protected.

<sup>15</sup> What a kind and impartial decision that was! Jehovah treated these women, who were in a vulnerable position, with dignity, as he did Israelites who had more favorable circumstances. (Ps. 68:5) This is just one of many Bible accounts that illustrate this heartwarming truth: Jehovah treats all of his servants with impartiality.—1 Sam. 16:1-13; Acts 10:30-35, 44-48.

### WE CAN IMITATE JEHOVAH

<sup>16</sup> How can we imitate Jehovah’s impartiality? Remember, impartiality has two aspects. Only if we *are* impartial will we *treat* others without partiality. True, all of us like to think of ourselves as being open-minded and impartial. You will likely agree, though, that it is not always easy to evaluate our own feelings objectively. So, what could we do to find out if we are known as being unbiased? Well, when Jesus was interested in knowing

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15. (a) How does Jehovah treat his people, especially those who are vulnerable? (b) What other Bible accounts illustrate that Jehovah is impartial?

16. How can we develop and strengthen our impartiality?

what people were saying about him, he asked his trusted friends: “Who are men saying the Son of man is?” (Matt. 16: 13, 14) Why not follow Jesus in that? You could ask some friend whom you can count on for candor whether you have a reputation for being impartial. If he or she concedes that there seem to be some lingering traces of racial, social, or economic partiality, what should you do? Pray earnestly to Jehovah about your feelings, begging him to help you adjust your attitude so that it will reflect his impartiality to a fuller degree.—Matt. 7:7; Col. 3:10, 11.

<sup>17</sup> In the Christian congregation, we express our desire to imitate Jehovah’s impartiality by treating all our brothers and sisters with dignity and loving-kindness. For instance, when it comes to showing hospitality, we want to invite all sorts of fellow believers, including those whose background differs from ours as well as those who are poor, orphaned, or widowed. (**Read Galatians 2:10; James 1: 27.**) Further, in the Kingdom-preaching work, we share the good news impartially with people of all backgrounds, including those from foreign countries. How happy we are that we have access to Bible literature in some 600 languages. What a tangible proof of impartiality!

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, as we take time to reflect on how approachable and impartial Jehovah is, our appreciation for him deepens. Deepened appreciation, in turn, ought to move us to imitate Jehovah’s qualities to the full, demonstrating them in our dealings with fellow believers and with those to whom we preach.

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17. In what ways can we treat others impartially?

18. How will you personally demonstrate that you appreciate Jehovah’s approachableness and impartiality?





## APPRECIATE JEHOVAH'S GENEROSITY AND REASONABLENESS

*"Jehovah is good to all,  
and his mercies are  
over all his works."*

—Ps. 145:9.

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### HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN?

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What are two of Jehovah's  
qualities for which we can  
deepen our appreciation?

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How can we imitate Jehovah's  
generosity?

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In what ways can we imitate  
Jehovah's reasonableness?

"WE'VE been married for nearly 35 years," says a Christian named Monika. "My husband and I know each other very well. Yet, even after all these years, we're still learning things about each other that we never knew!" No doubt, the same is true in countless marriages and friendships.

<sup>2</sup> We enjoy getting better acquainted with those whom we love. Of all the friendships we can cultivate, however, none are more important than our friendship with Jehovah. We will never know all there is to know about him. (Rom. 11:33) Throughout all eternity, we will have the opportunity and joy to deepen our appreciation for Jehovah's qualities. —Eccl. 3:11.

<sup>3</sup> The preceding article helped us to deepen our appreciation for Jehovah's approachableness and his impartiality. Let us now consider two more of Jehovah's endearing qualities—his generosity and his reasonableness. In so doing, we will come to recognize more fully that "Jehovah is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works."—Ps. 145:9.

### JEHOVAH IS GENEROUS

<sup>4</sup> What does it mean to be generous? We find the answer in Jesus' words recorded at Acts 20:35: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." With that simple statement, Jesus captured the essence of true generosity. A generous person gives freely of his time, energy, and resources to benefit others—and he does so gladly. Really, gener-

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- 1, 2. Jehovah's friends have what opportunity?
  3. What will we consider in this article?
  4. What is the essence of true generosity?

osity is measured, not by the size of the gift, but by the motive of the giver. (*Read 2 Corinthians 9:7.*) No one is more generous than our “happy God,” Jehovah. —1 Tim. 1:11.

<sup>5</sup> How does Jehovah demonstrate generosity? He provides for the needs of all humans, including those not yet worshipping him. Indeed, “Jehovah is good to *all*.” He “makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous.” (Matt. 5:45) That is why the apostle Paul, when speaking to unbelievers, could say that Jehovah “did good, giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts to the full with food and good cheer.” (Acts 14:17) Clearly, Jehovah is generous toward all humans.—Luke 6:35.

<sup>6</sup> Jehovah especially delights in providing for the needs of his faithful worshippers. King David observed: “A young man I used to be, I have also grown old, and yet I have not seen anyone righteous left entirely, nor his offspring looking for bread.” (Ps. 37:25) Many faithful Christians have experienced such evidence of Jehovah’s care. Consider an example.

<sup>7</sup> Some years ago, a full-time minister named Nancy found herself in a predicament. “I needed \$66 to pay my rent, which was due the next day,” Nancy recalls. “I didn’t know how I was going to come up with the money. I prayed about the problem, and then I went to my job as a waitress. I didn’t expect to receive many tips that evening because it was a time of the week that was typi-



The Israelites were encouraged to imitate Jehovah’s generosity  
(See paragraph 9)


cally not very busy. To my surprise, several customers came to the restaurant that night. When I finished my shift and added up the tips I had received, the total was \$66.” Nancy is convinced that Jehovah generously provided exactly what she needed.—Matt. 6:33.

<sup>8</sup> Jehovah’s most generous gift is available to everyone. What is it? The ransom sacrifice of his Son. Jesus said: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) In this context, “the world” refers to humankind. Yes, Jehovah’s most generous gift is open to all who choose to accept it. Those who exercise faith in Jesus will receive life in abundance—everlasting life! (John 10:10) Really, what greater proof could there be that Jehovah is generous?

8. What is Jehovah’s most generous gift?

5. In what ways does Jehovah demonstrate generosity?

6, 7. (a) Jehovah especially delights in providing for the needs of whom? (b) Illustrate how God provides for his faithful worshippers.



"Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled."—Col. 3:23  
(See paragraph 17)

"Honor Jehovah with your valuable things."—Prov. 3:9  
(See paragraph 11)

### IMITATE JEHOVAH'S GENEROSITY

<sup>9</sup> How can we imitate Jehovah's generosity? Jehovah "furnishes us all things richly for *our* enjoyment"; hence, we should want to be "ready to share" with others, thus contributing to *their* joy. (1 Tim. 6:17-19) We gladly use our resources to give gifts to our loved ones and to help those in need. (**Read Deuteronomy 15:7.**) What can help us to remember to be generous? Some Christians take this practical approach: Whenever they receive a gift, they look for an opportunity to give someone else a gift. The Christian congregation is blessed with countless brothers and sisters who cultivate a spirit of generosity.

<sup>10</sup> One of the best ways to be generous is to give of ourselves in word and

9. How can we imitate Jehovah's generosity?

10. What is one outstanding way to be generous?

deed. How can we do that? By using our time and energy to help and encourage others. (Gal. 6:10) To test how we are doing in this regard, we might ask ourselves: 'Do others sense that I'm willing to give of myself and listen to their concerns? If someone asks for assistance with a project or an errand, do I say yes whenever possible? When was the last time that I gave sincere commendation to a family member or a fellow believer?' When we "practice giving," we are sure to draw closer both to Jehovah and to our friends.—Luke 6:38; Prov. 19:17.

<sup>11</sup> We can also be generous toward Jehovah. "Honor Jehovah with your valuable things," admonish the Scriptures. (Prov. 3:9) Those "valuable things" include our time, energy, and resources, which we can freely spend in his service.

11. What are some ways that we can be generous toward Jehovah?



Even young children can learn to be generous toward Jehovah. "When our family makes a donation at the Kingdom Hall, we let our children put the money in the contribution box," says their father, Jason. "They enjoy it because, as they put it, they're 'giving something to Jehovah.'" Children who experience the joy of giving to Jehovah while they are young are likely to continue being generous toward him in adulthood.—Prov. 22:6.

### JEHOVAH IS REASONABLE

<sup>12</sup> Another one of Jehovah's endearing qualities is reasonableness. What does it mean to be reasonable? The original-language word usually translated "reasonable" in the *New World Translation* literally means "yielding." (Titus 3: 1, 2, ftn.) A reasonable person does not insist on always holding to the letter of the law, nor is he unduly strict, stern, or harsh. Rather, he strives to be gentle in his dealings with others, taking into consideration their circumstances. He is willing to listen to others and, when appropriate, to yield to their wishes and adjust his requirements.

<sup>13</sup> How does Jehovah demonstrate reasonableness? He kindly considers his servants' feelings, and he is often able to accommodate their requests. For example, consider how Jehovah dealt with the righteous man Lot. When Jehovah determined that he would destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he gave Lot clear direction to flee to the mountains. For some reason, though, Lot pleaded for permission to flee to another location. Just think—Lot actually asked

Jehovah to change His instructions! —*Read Genesis 19:17-20.*

<sup>14</sup> It might be easy for someone to judge Lot as being weak or disobedient. After all, Jehovah surely could have kept Lot alive anywhere, so Lot's fears really had no basis. Nevertheless, they were still his fears—Lot felt what he felt, and Jehovah yielded accordingly. He allowed Lot to flee to a city that He had intended to destroy. (*Read Genesis 19:21, 22.*) Clearly, Jehovah is neither stern nor rigid. He is yielding and reasonable.

<sup>15</sup> Consider another example of Jehovah's reasonableness as manifested in the Mosaic Law. If an Israelite was too poor to offer a lamb or a goat as a sacrifice, he could offer instead two turtle-doves or two pigeons. But what if an Israelite was so poor that he could not even afford two pigeons? In that case, Jehovah allowed the needy Israelite to offer a little flour. However, note this important detail: It had to be, not just any flour, but "fine flour," the kind used for honored guests. (Gen. 18:6) Why is that significant?—*Read Leviticus 5:7, 11.*

<sup>16</sup> Well, imagine that you are an Israelite and quite poor. As you arrive at the tabernacle with a little flour to offer as a sacrifice, you notice wealthier Israelites bringing livestock. You might feel embarrassed about your seemingly insignificant sacrifice of flour. Then you remember that in Jehovah's eyes, your offering is significant. Why? For one thing, Jehovah required that the flour be of high quality. In effect, Jehovah was saying to poorer Israelites: 'I realize that you cannot offer as much as others can, but I also know that what you are giving

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**12.** What does it mean to be reasonable?

**13, 14.** (a) How does Jehovah demonstrate reasonableness? (b) What can we learn about reasonableness from the way God dealt with Lot?

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**15, 16.** How did the Mosaic Law reflect Jehovah's reasonableness? (See opening image.)

me is your best.’ Truly, Jehovah displays reasonableness by taking into account his servants’ limitations and their circumstances.—Ps. 103:14.

<sup>17</sup> We can draw comfort from knowing that in his reasonableness, Jehovah accepts our whole-souled service. (Col. 3:23) An elderly Italian sister named Constance said: “Speaking to others about my Creator is what I have always loved to do the most. That is why I continue to preach and to conduct Bible studies. Sometimes I regret that I cannot do more because of my health. But I realize that Jehovah knows my limitations and that he loves me and appreciates what I am able to do.”

### IMITATE JEHOVAH’S REASONABLENESS

<sup>18</sup> How can we imitate Jehovah’s reasonableness? Think again of the way that Jehovah dealt with Lot. Jehovah was the one in authority; yet, he kindly listened as Lot expressed his feelings. And God accommodated Lot’s request. If you are a parent, can you imitate Jehovah’s example? Can you listen to your children’s requests and, where appropriate, accede to their wishes? Along this line, the September 1, 2007, issue of *The Watchtower* mentioned that some parents may bring their children into the discussion of house rules. For example, parents decide to impose a curfew, and surely parents have the right to choose a specific time that they require their children to arrive home. Even so, Christian parents might listen to their children’s expressions about the set time. In some instances, the parents may choose to make some adjustment in the set time

as long as Bible principles are not being jeopardized. Parents may find that when they consider their children’s thoughts about house rules, the children are more inclined to understand the rules and to obey them.

<sup>19</sup> Congregation elders strive to imitate Jehovah’s reasonableness by taking into account the circumstances of their fellow believers. Recall that Jehovah valued even the sacrifices offered by poorer Israelites. Likewise, some brothers and sisters are very limited in what they can do in the ministry, perhaps because of health problems or advanced age. What if these dear ones feel disheartened because of their limitations? The elders can kindly reassure them that Jehovah loves them for giving their best.—Mark 12:41-44.

<sup>20</sup> Of course, we would never want to confuse being reasonable with holding back from rendering service to God just to be kind to ourselves. (Matt. 16:22) We do not want to take it easy and then defend our attitude by saying that we are being reasonable. Rather, all of us need to “exert [ourselves] vigorously” in support of Kingdom interests. (Luke 13:24) Really, we strive to balance two principles. On the one hand, we exert ourselves, not holding back in our service. On the other hand, we remember that Jehovah never asks more of us than we can give. When we give him our best, we can be sure that he is pleased. Do we not enjoy serving such an appreciative and reasonable Master? In the following article, we will consider two more aspects of Jehovah’s endearing personality.—Ps. 73:28.

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17. You can be sure that Jehovah accepts what sort of service?

18. What is one way that parents can imitate Jehovah’s example?

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19. How can elders strive to imitate Jehovah’s reasonableness?

20. Does being reasonable mean holding back from serving God? Explain.



## APPRECIATE JEHOVAH'S LOYALTY AND FORGIVENESS

*"You, O Jehovah,  
are good and ready  
to forgive; and the  
loving-kindness to all  
those calling upon you  
is abundant."—Ps. 86:5.*

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### CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

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In what ways can we imitate  
Jehovah's loyalty?

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How can we imitate Jehovah's  
forgiveness?

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Why do you want to continue  
to deepen your appreciation for  
Jehovah's qualities?

HOW would you define a true friend? "To me, a true friend is someone who is always there for you and who forgives you when you fall short," says a Christian sister named Ashley. All of us appreciate friends who are loyal and forgiving. They help us to feel secure and loved.—Prov. 17:17.

<sup>2</sup> Jehovah is the most loyal and forgiving Friend we could have. It is as the psalmist put it: "You, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive; and the loving-kindness [or, "loyal love"] to all those calling upon you is abundant." (Ps. 86:5) What does it mean to be loyal and forgiving? How does Jehovah display those beautiful qualities? And how can we imitate his example? The answers will help us to deepen our love for our best Friend, Jehovah. They will also help us to strengthen our friendships with one another.—1 John 4:7, 8.

### JEHOVAH IS LOYAL

<sup>3</sup> Loyalty is a warm quality that includes devotion, faithfulness, and unswerving allegiance. A loyal person is not fickle. Rather, he lovingly attaches himself to someone (or something), sticking closely to that person (or thing) even through difficult circumstances. Yes, Jehovah is the supremely "loyal One."—Rev. 16:5.

<sup>4</sup> How does Jehovah demonstrate loyalty? He never abandons his faithful worshippers. One such worshipper, King David, testified to Jehovah's loyalty. (**Read 2 Samuel 22:26.**) During David's trials,

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1, 2. (a) Why do we appreciate friends who are loyal and forgiving? (b) We will address what questions?

3. What does it mean to be loyal?

4, 5. (a) How does Jehovah demonstrate loyalty? (b) How can we gain strength from reflecting on God's acts of loyalty?



Jehovah loyally guided, protected, and delivered him. (2 Sam. 22:1) David knew that Jehovah's loyalty involves more than mere words. Why did Jehovah act loyally toward David? Because David himself was "someone loyal." Jehovah cherishes the loyalty of his worshippers, and he repays it with loyalty toward them.—Prov. 2:6-8.

<sup>5</sup> We can gain strength from reflecting on Jehovah's acts of loyalty. "It really helps me when I read about how Jehovah dealt with David in times of distress," says a faithful brother named Reed. "Even when David was on the run, living in and out of caves, Jehovah always sustained him. I find that very encouraging! It reminds me that no matter what the circumstance might be, no matter how bleak the situation might seem, Jehovah will be there for me as long as I remain loyal to him." No doubt, you feel the same way.—Rom. 8:38, 39.

<sup>6</sup> In what other ways does Jehovah demonstrate loyalty? He remains true to his standards. "Even to one's old age I am the same," he assures us. (Isa. 46:4) He always makes decisions based on his unchanging standards of right and wrong. (Mal. 3:6) In addition, Jehovah demonstrates loyalty by remaining faithful to his word of promise. (Isa. 55:11) Jehovah's loyalty thus benefits all of his faithful worshippers. How so? When we do our best to adhere to Jehovah's standards, we can be confident that he will keep his promise to bless us.—Isa. 48:17, 18.

### IMITATE JEHOVAH'S LOYALTY

#### <sup>7</sup> How can we imitate Jehovah's loyal-

6. In what other ways does Jehovah demonstrate loyalty, and with what benefit to his worshippers?

7. What is one way that we can imitate God's loyalty?

ty? One way is by taking action in behalf of those who are facing difficult circumstances. (Prov. 3:27) For example, do you know of a fellow believer who is discouraged, perhaps because of health problems, family opposition, or personal failings? Why not take the initiative to offer that person some "good words, comforting words"? (Zech. 1:13)\* Doing so, you are proving yourself to be a loyal and true friend, one "sticking closer than a brother."—Prov. 18:24.

<sup>8</sup> We can also imitate Jehovah's loyalty by remaining true to those whom we love. For example, if we are married, we know that we must stay faithful to our marriage mate. (Prov. 5:15-18) So we do not take even the first step down a path that could lead to adultery. (Matt. 5:28) In addition, we show loyalty to our fellow believers by shunning hurtful gossip or slander, refusing to spread such negative talk or even to listen to it.—Prov. 12:18.


<sup>9</sup> Above all, we want to remain loyal to Jehovah. How do we do that? By striving to view things the way that he views them—loving what he loves and hating what he hates—and then conducting ourselves accordingly. (**Read Psalm 97:10.**) The more we bring our thoughts and feelings into harmony with Jehovah's thoughts and feelings, the more we will be inclined to obey his commands.—Ps. 119:104.

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\* For helpful suggestions in this regard, see the articles "Have You Encouraged Anyone Lately?" in the January 15, 1995, issue of *The Watchtower* and "Incite to Love and Fine Works—How?" in the April 1, 1995, issue.

8. How can we imitate Jehovah's loyalty, for example, in marriage?

9, 10. (a) To whom especially do we want to remain loyal? (b) Why will obeying Jehovah's commands not always be easy?



"There exists a friend sticking  
closer than a brother."

—Prov. 18:24

(See paragraph 7)

'Freely forgive one another.'

—Eph. 4:32

(See paragraph 16)

<sup>10</sup> Granted, it will not always be easy to obey Jehovah's commands. We may have to struggle to remain loyal. For instance, some single Christians would like to be married, but they have yet to find a suitable mate among worshippers of Jehovah. (1 Cor. 7:39) A single sister might see that her unbelieving coworkers are always trying to introduce her to some potential mate. The sister might be battling feelings of loneliness. Still, she puts forth determined effort to maintain her integrity to Jehovah. Do we not appreciate such sterling examples of loyalty? Surely Jehovah will reward all who remain faithful to him despite difficulties.—Heb. 11:6.

### JEHOVAH IS FORGIVING

<sup>11</sup> Among Jehovah's most endearing qualities is his willingness to forgive. What does it mean to be forgiving? Basically, it involves pardoning an offender

**11.** What does it mean to be forgiving?

when there is a valid basis for doing so. That is not to say that a forgiving person condones the offense or denies that it happened. Rather, he chooses to let go of resentment. The Scriptures teach that Jehovah is "ready to forgive" those who show genuine repentance.—Ps. 86:5.

<sup>12</sup> How does Jehovah demonstrate forgiveness? When Jehovah forgives, he does so "in a large way"; he forgives both *completely* and *permanently*. (Isa. 55:7) How do we know that Jehovah forgives *completely*? Consider the assurance found at **Acts 3:19. (Read.)** The apostle Peter urged his listeners to "repent . . . and turn around." When a sinner genuinely repents, he deeply regrets his wrong course. He is also determined not to repeat his sin. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) Moreover, true repentance moves a sinner to "turn around," abandoning his

**12.** (a) How does Jehovah demonstrate forgiveness? (b) What does it mean to have one's sins "blotted out"?

wrong course and pursuing a course that is pleasing to God. If Peter's listeners would manifest such genuine repentance, what would be the result? Peter said that they could get their sins "blotted out." That expression comes from a Greek word that means to "wipe out, erase." So when Jehovah forgives, he wipes the slate clean. He forgives completely.—Heb. 10:22; 1 John 1:7.

<sup>13</sup> How do we know that Jehovah's forgiveness is *permanent*? Consider Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the new covenant, made with anointed Christians, which makes true forgiveness possible for those who exercise faith in the ransom. (**Read Jeremiah 31:34.**) Jehovah says: "I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more." So Jehovah assures us that once he forgives, he will never in the future act against us because of those sins. He does not rehash our sins in order to accuse us or punish us again and again. Rather, Jehovah forgives those sins and puts them behind him—permanently.—Rom. 4:7, 8.

<sup>14</sup> We can gain comfort from meditating on Jehovah's forgiveness. Consider an example. Many years ago, a sister whom we will call Elaine was disfellowshipped. Several years later, she was reinstated. "Although I told myself and others that I believed that I was forgiven by Jehovah," admits Elaine, "I always felt that somehow he was at a distance or that others were closer to him and that he was more real to them." However, Elaine drew comfort from reading and meditating on some of the word pic-

tures that the Bible uses to describe Jehovah's forgiveness. "I felt Jehovah's love and tenderness toward me in a way that I had never realized before," Elaine adds. She was especially moved by this thought: "When Jehovah forgives our sins, we need not feel that we bear the stain of such sins for the rest of our life."\* Elaine says: "I realized that I had not believed that Jehovah could fully forgive me, and I thought that I would carry this burden for the rest of my life. I know that it will take time, but I am starting to feel that I really can draw closer to Jehovah, and I feel that a weight has been lifted off me." What a loving and forgiving God we serve!—Ps. 103:9.

### IMITATE JEHOVAH'S FORGIVENESS

<sup>15</sup> We can imitate Jehovah's forgiveness by choosing to be forgiving toward one another whenever there is a basis for doing so. (**Read Luke 17:3, 4.**) Recall that when Jehovah forgives, he forgets our sins in the sense that he does not thereafter hold them against us. When we forgive others, we too can forget by putting the matter behind us and not bringing it up again in the future.

<sup>16</sup> Being forgiving does not mean that we condone offenses or allow others to take unfair advantage of us. No. It basically means that we choose to let go of resentment. Significantly, though, in order to be forgiven by God, we must imitate Jehovah's forgiveness in our dealings with others. (Matt. 6:14, 15) After

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\* See paragraph 10 in chapter 26 of the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*.

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**13.** Of what do the words "their sin I shall remember no more" assure us?

**14.** How can we gain comfort from meditating on Jehovah's forgiveness? Give an example.

**15.** How can we imitate Jehovah's forgiveness?

**16.** (a) Does being forgiving mean that we condone offenses or let others take advantage of us? Explain. (b) To be forgiven by God, what must we do?





May our prayers for forgiveness be from the heart  
(See paragraph 17)

all, empathy moves Jehovah to remember that “we are dust.” (Ps. 103:14) Really, then, should not empathy move us to make allowances for the shortcomings of others, forgiving them freely from the heart?—Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13.

<sup>17</sup> Of course, it is not always easy to forgive. Even some anointed Christians in the first century apparently found it challenging to settle their differences. (Phil. 4:2) If we have been hurt by a fellow believer, what can help us? Consider Job. He was deeply hurt when his “friends”—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zo-

17. What can help us if we have been hurt by a fellow believer?

phar—hurled baseless accusations at him. (Job 10:1; 19:2) In the end, Jehovah reproved those false accusers. God directed them to go to Job and present an offering for their sins. (Job 42:7-9) But Jehovah also required that *Job* do something. What was it? Jehovah directed Job to pray in behalf of his former accusers. Job did as Jehovah asked, and Jehovah blessed him for his forgiving spirit. (*Read Job 42:10, 12, 16, 17.*) The lesson for us? A sincere prayer in behalf of someone who has offended us may help us to let go of resentment.

### CONTINUE APPRECIATING JEHOVAH’S QUALITIES TO THE FULL

<sup>18</sup> It has certainly been refreshing for us to consider various aspects of Jehovah’s loving personality. We have seen that he is approachable, impartial, generous, reasonable, loyal, and forgiving. Of course, we have only scratched the surface. We can have the joy of learning more about Jehovah throughout all eternity. (Eccl. 3:11) We agree with the apostle Paul, who wrote: “O the depth of God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge”—not to mention love and the six qualities we have considered.—Rom. 11:33.

<sup>19</sup> May all of us continue to deepen our appreciation for Jehovah’s endearing personality. We can do that by becoming acquainted with his qualities, reflecting on them, and then imitating them in our own life. (Eph. 5:1) As we do so, we will undoubtedly come to agree more and more with the psalmist who sang: “As for me, the drawing near to God is good for me.”—Ps. 73:28.

18, 19. How may we continue to deepen our appreciation for Jehovah’s endearing personality?

## Who were “the sons of the true God” mentioned at Genesis 6:2, 4 as living before the Flood?

■ The evidence is that this expression refers to spirit sons of God. But what evidence?

The first of those verses reads: “The sons of the true God began to notice the daughters of men, that they were good-looking; and they went taking wives for themselves, namely, all whom they chose.”—Gen. 6:2.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the expressions “the sons of the true God” and “the sons of God” occur at Genesis 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; and Psalm 89:6. What do those texts indicate about these “sons of God”?

“The sons of the true God” that we read about at Job 1:6 were clearly spirit creatures assembled in God’s presence. Among them was Satan, who had been “roving about in the earth.” (Job 1:7; 2:1, 2) Similarly, at Job 38:4-7, we read of “the sons of God” who ‘shouted in applause’ when God ‘laid

the cornerstone’ of the earth. They must have been angelic sons, for humans had not yet been created. “The sons of God” mentioned at Psalm 89:6 are definitely heavenly creatures in God’s company, not humans.

Who then are “the sons of the true God” mentioned in the account at Genesis 6:2, 4? In harmony with the preceding Biblical facts, it is logical to conclude that the account is referring to spirit sons of God who came to earth.

Some find it hard to accept that angels might be interested in having sexual relations. Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 22:30 show that marriage and sex relations do not exist in heaven. Yet, angels have on occasion materialized human bodies, even eating and drinking with men. (Gen. 18:1-8; 19:1-3) Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that in such a materialized form, they could have sexual relations with women.

There are Bible-based reasons for believing that some angels did just that. Jude 6, 7 compares the sin of the men of Sodom, who unnaturally went after flesh, with that of “the angels that did not keep their original position but forsook their own proper dwelling place.” A point in common was that both those angels and the Sodomites “committed fornication excessively and [went] out after flesh for unnatural use.” A similar passage in 1 Peter 3:19, 20 links disobedient angels with “Noah’s days.” (2 Pet. 2:4, 5) Consequently, the course that disobedient angels in Noah’s day took can be compared to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Such a conclusion makes sense when we recognize that “the sons of the true God” mentioned at Genesis 6:2, 4 were angels who materialized bodies and committed immorality with women.



## *The Bible says that Jesus “preached to the spirits in prison.” (1 Pet. 3:19) What does this mean?*

■ The apostle Peter identifies these spirits as those who had “once been disobedient when the patience of God was waiting in Noah’s days.” (1 Pet. 3:20) Clearly, Peter was referring to spirit creatures who chose to join Satan’s rebellion. Jude mentions the angels who “did not keep their original position but forsook their own proper dwelling place,” saying that God “has reserved [them] with eternal bonds under dense darkness for the judgment of the great day.”—Jude 6.

In what way were spirit creatures disobedient in Noah’s day? Before the Deluge, these wicked spirits materialized in human form—something that God had not purposed for them. (Gen. 6:2, 4) Furthermore, those angels who had sex with women were practicing a perversion. God did not create spirit creatures to engage in sexual relations with women. (Gen. 5:2) These wicked, disobedient angels will be destroyed in God’s due time. For now, as Jude notes, they are in a condition of “dense darkness”—a spiritual prison, so to speak.

When and how did Jesus preach to these “spirits in prison”? Peter writes that this occurred after Jesus was “made alive in the spirit.” (1 Pet. 3:18, 19) Note, too, that Peter says that Jesus “preached.” Peter’s use of the past tense suggests that the preaching occurred before Peter wrote his first letter. It seems, then, that sometime after his resurrection, Jesus made a proclamation to the wicked spirits regarding the fully justified punishment they are due to receive. It was not a preaching that held out any hope for them. It was a preaching of judgment. (Jonah 1:1, 2) Once Jesus had demonstrated his faith and loyalty to death and then was resurrected—proving that the Devil indeed had no hold on him—Jesus had the basis for making such a condemnatory proclamation.—John 14:30; 16:8-11.

In the future, Jesus will bind and throw into the abyss both Satan and those angels. (Luke 8:30, 31; Rev. 20:1-3) Until that time, these disobedient spirits are in a condition of dense spiritual darkness, and their final destruction is certain.—Rev. 20:7-10.







## LET JEHOVAH'S DISCIPLINE MOLD YOU

*"With your counsel  
you will lead me, and  
afterward you will  
take me even to  
glory."*—PS. 73:24.

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### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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What shows that the Great Potter is neither arbitrary nor partial with regard to discipline?

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Why can we be glad that our Potter can "feel regret"?

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How should we respond to Jehovah's counsel or discipline?

"AS FOR me, the drawing near to God is good for me. In the Sovereign Lord Jehovah I have placed my refuge." (Ps. 73:28) Here the psalmist expressed his confidence in God. What circumstances led him to this profound conclusion? Upon observing the peace of wicked people, at first the psalmist felt bitter at heart. He lamented: "It is in vain that I have cleansed my heart and that I wash my hands in innocence itself." (Ps. 73:2, 3, 13, 21) When he came into "the grand sanctuary of God," however, he was in a setting that helped him to adjust his thinking and maintain his intimacy with God. (Ps. 73:16-18) This experience taught that God-fearing man a vital lesson: Being among God's people, accepting counsel, and applying it are essential to a close relationship with Jehovah.—Ps. 73:24.

<sup>2</sup> We too desire an intimate relationship with the true and living God. To reach that goal, it is vital that we allow his counsel or discipline to mold us, so that we become individuals who are pleasing to him! In past times, God mercifully gave individuals and nations opportunities to respond to his discipline. The accounts of their response are recorded in the Bible "for our instruction" and "for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived." (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11) Examining these accounts closely will give us insight into Jehovah's personality and show us how we may benefit from his molding.

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1, 2. (a) What things are essential to a good relationship with Jehovah? (b) How will we benefit by examining Scriptural accounts of the ways in which people responded to God's discipline?

## HOW THE POTTER EXERCISES HIS AUTHORITY

<sup>3</sup> Describing Jehovah's authority over individuals and nations in an illustrative way, Isaiah 64:8 states: "O Jehovah, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are our Potter; and all of us are the work of your hand." A potter has full authority to mold the clay into the type of vessel he wants to make. The clay has no control over the matter. So it is with man and God. The man cannot rightly dispute with God any more than the clay can with the potter whose hands are giving it a form.—*Read Jeremiah 18:1-6.*

<sup>4</sup> With ancient Israel, Jehovah demonstrated his ability to do what the potter does to clay. But there is a marked difference. A potter can make any sort of vessel he is capable of making from a lump of clay. Does Jehovah arbitrarily mold people or nations, making some good and others bad? The Bible's answer is no. Jehovah has given mankind a very precious gift—the gift of free will. He does not exercise his sovereign authority in a way that nullifies his gift. Humans must choose to be molded by the Creator, Jehovah.—*Read Jeremiah 18:7-10.*

<sup>5</sup> What if humans stubbornly refuse to be molded by the Great Potter? How, then, does he exercise his divine authority? Think about what happens to the clay if it becomes unsuited for the intended purpose. Why, the potter can make another type of vessel out of it or simply discard it! When the clay is useless,

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3. At Isaiah 64:8 and Jeremiah 18:1-6, how is Jehovah's authority over people illustrated? (See opening image.)

4. Does God arbitrarily mold people or nations? Explain.

5. When humans refuse to be molded by Jehovah, how does he exercise his authority over them?

though, generally the potter is at fault. This is never the case with our Potter. (Deut. 32:4) When a person does not yield to Jehovah's molding, the fault always lies with that person. Jehovah exercises his potterlike authority over humans by adjusting his dealings with them depending on their response to his molding. Those who respond properly are fashioned in a beneficial way. For example, anointed Christians are "vessels of mercy" who have been molded into 'vessels for an honorable use.' On the other hand, those who stubbornly oppose God end up as "vessels of wrath made fit for destruction."—Rom. 9:19-23.

<sup>6</sup> One way that Jehovah molds people is through counsel or discipline. We can see how he exercises authority over those whom he molds by considering Israel's first two kings—Saul and David. When King David committed adultery with Bath-sheba, his actions adversely affected him and others. Even though David was king, Jehovah did not hold back from giving him firm discipline. God sent his prophet Nathan to David with a strong message. (2 Sam. 12:1-12) How did David respond? He was cut to the heart and repented. David became a recipient of God's mercy.—*Read 2 Samuel 12:13.*

<sup>7</sup> In contrast, David's predecessor, King Saul, did not respond well to counsel. Jehovah had given Saul a direct command through the prophet Samuel: Devote to destruction all the Amalekites and their livestock. Saul disobeyed this divine command. He spared Agag, the king, and the choice livestock. Why? At least in part because he wanted to bring honor to himself. (1 Sam. 15:1-3, 7-9, 12) When counseled, Saul should

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6, 7. How did King David and King Saul differ in their response to Jehovah's counsel?



Saul minimized and rejected counsel. He refused to be molded!  
(See paragraph 7)

David was cut to the heart and accepted counsel. He let God mold him. Do you?  
(See paragraph 6)

have let his heart be softened, allowing himself to be shaped by the Great Potter. Instead, Saul refused to be molded. He justified his behavior. He rationalized that what he had done was permissible because the livestock could be used as a sacrifice, and he minimized Samuel's counsel. Jehovah rejected Saul as king, and Saul never recovered his good relationship with the true God.—**Read 1 Samuel 15:13-15, 20-23.**

### GOD IS NOT PARTIAL

<sup>8</sup> Jehovah gives not only individuals but also nations the opportunity to respond to his molding. In 1513 B.C.E., the sons of Israel, liberated from slavery in

8. We can learn what lesson from the way the nation of Israel responded to Jehovah's molding?

Egypt, entered into a covenant relationship with God. Israel was his chosen nation and was privileged to be molded by him, as though on the Great Potter's wheel. However, the people kept doing what was bad in Jehovah's eyes, even taking up the worship of gods of surrounding nations. Over and over, Jehovah sent prophets to bring them to their senses, but Israel did not listen. (Jer. 35: 12-15) For their stubborn course, Israel had to be severely disciplined. Like a vessel fit for destruction, the northern ten-tribe kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians and the southern two-tribe kingdom was dealt with similarly by the Babylonians. What a powerful lesson this should teach us! Jehovah's molding will help us only if we respond properly to it.



<sup>9</sup> Jehovah also gave the people of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh an opportunity to respond to his warning. His word occurred to Jonah, saying: “Get up, go to Nineveh the great city, and proclaim against her that their badness has come up before me.” Nineveh was deemed fit for destruction.—Jonah 1:1, 2; 3:1-4.

<sup>10</sup> However, when Jonah declared the message of doom, “the men of Nineveh began to put faith in God, and they proceeded to proclaim a fast and to put on sackcloth, from the greatest one of them even to the least one of them.” Their king “rose up from his throne and put off his official garment from himself and covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the ashes.” The Ninevites responded to Jehovah’s molding efforts and repented. Consequently, Jehovah did not cause the calamity.—Jonah 3:5-10.

<sup>11</sup> Being a chosen nation had not excluded Israel from discipline. The Ninevites, on the other hand, were not in a covenant relationship with God. Still, Jehovah had his message of judgment declared to them and showed them mercy when they proved to be like malleable clay in his hands. How vividly these two examples show that Jehovah our God “treats none with partiality”—Deut. 10:17.

### JEHOVAH IS REASONABLE AND ADAPTABLE

<sup>12</sup> The way that God is willing to mold us shows that he is reasonable and adaptable.

**9, 10.** How did the Ninevites respond to divine warning?

**11.** What quality of Jehovah comes to the fore in his dealings with Israel and with Nineveh?

**12, 13.** (a) Why does God alter his course when individuals respond to his molding? (b) Jehovah’s ‘feeling regret’ meant what in the case of Saul? of Nineveh?

able. That is evident in situations where Jehovah determines to take action based on his just judgment of people but then changes his mind because of their response. The Scriptures state concerning the first king of Israel that Jehovah ‘regretted that he had caused Saul to reign as king.’ (1 Sam. 15:11) When the people of Nineveh repented and turned around from their bad way, the Bible says: “The true God felt regret over the calamity that he had spoken of causing to them; and he did not cause it.”—Jonah 3:10.

<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew term translated “felt regret” actually pertains to a change of attitude or intention. Jehovah’s attitude toward Saul changed from selecting him as king to that of rejecting him. This change occurred, not because Jehovah had erred in choosing Saul, but because Saul acted without faith and became disobedient. The true God felt regret in the case of the Ninevites; that is, he changed his intention regarding them. How comforting it is to know that Jehovah our Potter is reasonable and adaptable, gracious and merciful, willing to change his course based on positive changes that erring ones make!

### LET US NOT REJECT THE DISCIPLINE OF JEHOVAH

<sup>14</sup> Jehovah molds us today primarily by means of his Word, the Bible, and his organization. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) Should we not accept whatever counsel or discipline we receive through these means? Regardless of how long we have been baptized or how many privileges of service we have received, we should continue to respond to Jehovah’s counsel, allowing it to shape us into vessels for an honorable use.

**14.** (a) How does Jehovah mold us today? (b) How should we respond to God’s molding?

<sup>15</sup> Some discipline may come our way in the form of instruction or correction. At other times, though, we may need discipline because we have not done what is right. Such discipline may involve the loss of privileges. Consider the example of Dennis\* who was serving as an elder. He fell into wrongdoing because of poor judgment regarding business matters, and he was privately reprovved. How did Dennis feel the night it was announced to the congregation that he was no longer serving as an elder? “I had an overwhelming sense of failure,” he says. “Over the past 30 years, I had had many privileges. I had been a regular pioneer, had served at Bethel, had been appointed as a ministerial servant and then as an elder. I had also just given my first talk at a district convention. Suddenly, it was all gone. Besides feeling shame and embarrassment, I thought that there was no longer any place for me in the organization.”

<sup>16</sup> Dennis had to change his course, turning away from the wrong that required that he be corrected. But what helped him to cope with negative feelings? He explains: “I was determined to maintain a good spiritual routine. And just as important was the support I received from the Christian brotherhood and the encouragement I got from our publications. The article ‘Did You Once Serve? Can You Serve Again?’ in the August 15, 2009, issue of *The Watchtower* was like a personal letter in answer to my prayers. The counsel I cherished most was, ‘While you do not have additional

responsibilities in the congregation, concentrate on strengthening your spirituality.’” How has Dennis benefited from the discipline? After some years, he says, “Jehovah has again blessed me with the privilege of serving as a ministerial servant.”

<sup>17</sup> Disfellowshipping is another type of discipline from Jehovah. It protects the congregation from a bad influence and can play a role in the sinner’s recovery. (1 Cor. 5:6, 7, 11) Robert was disfellowshipped for nearly 16 years, during which time his parents and siblings firmly and loyally applied the direction in God’s Word to quit mixing in company with wrongdoers, not even greeting such ones. Robert has been reinstated for some years now and is progressing well spiritually. When asked what moved him to return to Jehovah and His people after such a long time, he replied that the stand that his family took affected him. “Had my family associated with me even a little, say to check up on me, that small dose of association would have satisfied me and likely not allowed my desire for association to be a motivating factor to return to God.”

<sup>18</sup> We may not need that same discipline, but what type of clay will we prove to be in the hands of the Great Potter? How will we respond when disciplined? Will we prove to be like David or like Saul? The Great Potter is our Father. Never forget that “the one whom Jehovah loves he reprovves, even as a father does a son in whom he finds pleasure.” Therefore, ‘do not reject the discipline of Jehovah, and do not abhor his reproof.’ —Prov. 3:11, 12.

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\* Names have been changed.

**15, 16.** (a) What negative feelings may arise when discipline involves a loss of privileges? Illustrate. (b) What can help us to cope with negative emotions associated with discipline?

**17.** What role can disfellowshipping play in a sinner’s recovery? Illustrate.

**18.** What type of clay should we prove to be in the hands of the Great Potter?

# ELDERS Will You Refresh “the Tired Soul”?

Angela,\* a single sister in her 30's, is a bit nervous. She is waiting for the elders. What are they going to say to her? True, she has missed a few meetings, but she is exhausted after working all day long for elderly people. In addition to her daily concerns, she is deeply worried about her own mother's health.

If you were to visit Angela, how would you encourage this “tired soul”? (Jer. 31: 25) First, though, how would you prepare to make a refreshing shepherding call?

## THINK ABOUT YOUR BROTHERS' CIRCUMSTANCES

At times, we all get tired because of our secular work or theocratic responsi-

bilities. For instance, the prophet Daniel “felt exhausted” when he received a vision that he could not understand. (Dan. 8:27) He was helped when the angel Gabriel appeared to him. God's messenger imparted understanding to Daniel, assured him that his prayers had been heard by Jehovah, and told him that he was still “someone very desirable.” (Dan. 9:21-23) On a later occasion, well-chosen words spoken by another angel strengthened the weary prophet.—Dan. 10:19.

Similarly, before visiting a fellow believer who may be tired or discouraged, take time to think about his circumstances. What problems does he face? How may these problems be draining him of

Before making your visit, consider the circumstances of your fellow believer

\* Names have been changed.







Our fellow believers usually enjoy expressing their thoughts on the Bible

energy? What fine qualities does he display? “My focus is on my brothers’ strengths,” notes Richard, an elder for over 20 years. “By carefully considering their circumstances before the visit,” he adds, “it becomes easier to find ways to give encouragement that fits their particular needs.” If another elder will accompany you on the call, why not together consider your brother’s situation?

### PUT YOUR BROTHERS AT EASE

You would probably agree that sharing personal feelings can be embarrassing. To illustrate: Your brother may find it difficult to open up to visiting elders. How, then, can you break the ice? Your sincere smile and a few reassuring words may have a good effect. Michael, an elder for over 40 years, often starts his visits with such comments as: “You know, one of the nicest privileges of an elder is to visit the brothers in their homes and get to

know them better. So I have really been looking forward to our visit today.”

You may choose to offer a heartfelt prayer early in the visit. In his prayers, the apostle Paul rightly highlighted his brothers’ faith, love, and endurance. (1 Thess. 1:2, 3) By expressing how you feel about your brother’s fine qualities, you actually prepare your heart and his for a constructive conversation. Your words can also have a soothing effect. “At times, we all forget the good that we are accomplishing,” observes Ray, an experienced elder. “So when someone reminds us of it, it is refreshing to our soul.”

### IMPART A SPIRITUAL GIFT

Like Paul, you can impart a “spiritual gift” by sharing a Scriptural thought, even from a single verse. (Rom. 1:11) For instance, a depressed brother may feel worthless, like the psalmist who compared himself to a shriveled “skin bot-

tle in the smoke.” (Ps. 119:83, 176) After giving a brief explanation about that expression, you might express your confidence that your brother has “not forgotten” God’s commandments.

Similarly, would the illustration about the lost drachma coin touch a sister who has drifted away from the congregation or has slowed down? (Luke 15:8-10) The missing coin may have been part of a precious necklace made up of many silver coins. By your discussing that illustration, she could be helped to see that she is a valuable part of the Christian congregation. After discussing that, you might highlight how much Jehovah cares for her as one of his little sheep.

Our fellow believers usually enjoy expressing their thoughts on the Bible. So do not do all the talking! After reading a verse that applies to their situation, you could isolate a key word or phrase and ask them to comment on it. For example, after reading 2 Corinthians 4:16, an elder could ask, “Have you personally experienced ways in which Jehovah renews you?” This approach can lead to a true “interchange of encouragement.”—Rom. 1:12.

You might also refresh a fellow believer by discussing a Bible character to whom he or she can relate. Someone who feels despondent would likely relate to such characters as Hannah or Epaphroditus, who at times were depressed but remained precious in God’s eyes. (1 Sam. 1:9-11, 20; Phil. 2:25-30) Why not discuss some fine Bible examples when the situation allows for this?

### **MAKE SURE TO FOLLOW THROUGH**

You can show your genuine concern for your brothers and sisters by your ongoing interest following the visit. (Acts

15:36) When concluding the call, you may find it practical to make an appointment to share in the ministry together. When Bernard, an experienced elder, again meets a brother or a sister he has recently visited, he may discreetly allude to any advice given by asking, “Tell me, did it work out well?” By showing such personal interest, you will be able to determine whether further help is needed.

More than ever, our brothers and sisters need to feel cared for, understood, and loved. (1 Thess. 5:11) Hence, before making a shepherding visit, take time to reflect on your brother’s situation. Make it a matter of prayer. Select appropriate scriptures. Then you will find the right words to refresh “the tired soul”!

Let your genuine concern be ongoing



## Have you carefully read the recent issues of *The Watchtower*?

Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

### What is bibliomancy, and how should Christians view it?

Bibliomancy is the practice of opening the Bible at random in the belief that the first verse encountered contains the help one needs. True Christians do not look for omens. Rather, they study the Bible to gain accurate knowledge and divine guidance.—12/15, page 3.

### What is “the world” that will pass away?

“The world” that will pass away is the world of mankind whose lives are out of harmony with God’s will. (1 John 2:17) The earth and faithful humans will survive.—1/1, pages 5-7.

### Although he died, how does Abel yet speak to us? (Heb. 11:4)

He does so through faith. We can learn from and seek to imitate his faith. His example is still alive and vibrant.—1/1, page 12.

### In what areas should we take care not to let ourselves be distanced from God?

Some areas are these: our employment or career, the recreation and entertainment we choose, attachment to a dis-fellowshipped relative, involvement in modern technology, concerns about our health, a wrong view of money, and placing too

high a value on our views or position.—1/15, pages 12-21.

### What can we learn from Moses’ humility?

Rather than let authority go to his head, Moses relied on God, not on himself. We never want to let power, authority, or natural ability go to our head; rather, we want to trust in Jehovah. (Prov. 3:5, 6) —2/1, page 5.

### Where will the resurrected ones live?

A limited number—144,000—will live in heaven. Most who will be resurrected, though, will be brought back to life on earth, with the prospect of living forever here.—3/1, page 6.

### What did it mean that the Israelites were “uncircumcised in heart”? (Jer. 9:26)

They were stubbornly rebellious and needed to remove what made their heart unresponsive—thinking, affections, or motives that were in conflict with God’s. (Jer. 5:23, 24)—3/15, pages 9-10.

### How was Jesus an example of one who had a meaningful life?

He had a purpose in life, that of doing God’s will. He had intense love for his Father, and he loved people. Accordingly, Jesus knew that he had his Father’s love and approval. Those are keys to a meaningful life.—4/1, pages 4-5.

### What does the earthly part of God’s organization include?

It includes the Governing Body, branch committees, traveling overseers, bodies of elders, congregations, and individual Witnesses.—4/15, page 29.

### Why can we say that God was not cruel in executing his judgments?

Jehovah does not delight in the death of the wicked. (Ezek. 33:11) His past acts show that he lovingly warns people before executing judgment. This can give us hope of surviving future judgments.—5/1, pages 5-6.

### Did the Israelites execute criminals by hanging them on stakes?

No. Other ancient nations did that but not the Israelites. At least during the time of the Hebrew Scriptures, evildoers were first put to death, such as by stoning. (Lev. 20:2, 27) Then the corpse might be hung on a stake as a warning to others.—5/15, page 13.

### Why is world peace so elusive?

Though humans have accomplished much, they do not have the ability to direct their own steps. (Jer. 10:23) Satan controls the world, so humans will not be able to bring peace. (1 John 5:19)—6/1, page 16.

