

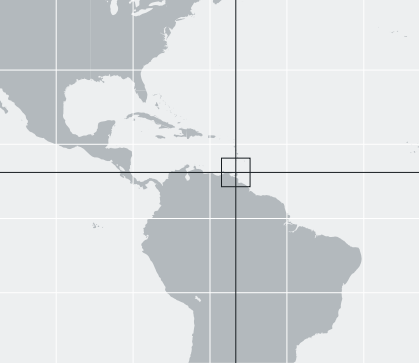
JUNE 2016

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
AUGUST 1-28, 2016



COVER IMAGE:
TRINIDAD

There are many fishing villages along the coasts of Trinidad and Tobago. Jehovah's Witnesses often take the opportunity to speak with fishermen they meet

PUBLISHERS
9,679

BIBLE STUDIES
11,331

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2015)
24,103

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Jehovah “Cares for You”

WHY can you be sure that those words are true and that Jehovah truly does care for you? One reason is that the Bible specifically says so. First Peter 5:7 states: “Throw all your anxiety on him, because *he cares for you.*” What evidence do you have that Jehovah God takes an interest in you?

GOD PROVIDES FOR PEOPLE MATERIALLY

For one thing, God has qualities that you likely look for in your best friends. Those who treat one another with kindness and generosity often become close friends. As you can easily see, Jehovah is kind and generous to humans every day. Consider one example: “He makes his sun rise on both the wicked and the good and makes it rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Matt. 5:45) What do sunshine and rain accomplish? Among other things, by means of them, God ‘satisfies people with food and fills their hearts with gladness.’ (Acts 14:17) Yes, Jehovah sees to it that the earth produces plenty of food, and few things make us happier than a good meal.

Why, then, do so many go hungry? Because human rulers often concentrate on gaining political power and making financial profits rather than on improving the lives of the people. Jehovah will soon solve that problem of greed by replacing the current political system with the heavenly Kingdom, with his Son serving as King. At that time, no one will go hungry. In the

meantime, God sustains his faithful servants. (Ps. 37:25) Is that not a manifestation of his care?

JEHOVAH IS NOT STINGY WITH HIS TIME

A good friend shares his time with you. He may spend hours talking with you about what interests both of you. And a good friend will listen carefully when you tell him about your problems and concerns. Is Jehovah attentive in that way? Yes, indeed! He is receptive to our prayers. Thus, the Bible encourages us to “persevere in prayer,” even to “pray constantly.”—Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17.

How much time is Jehovah willing to spend listening to your prayers? An example from the Bible gives us the answer. Before Jesus selected his apostles, “he spent the whole night in prayer to God.” (Luke 6:12) In that prayer, Jesus likely reviewed many of his disciples by name, considered their qualities and weaknesses, and asked his Fa-

ther for help in choosing them. By the time the sun shone on a new day, Jesus knew that he had selected those best qualified to serve as his apostles. As the “Hearer of prayer,” Jehovah is pleased to listen to all sincere prayers. (Ps. 65:2) Even if a person spends hours praying over a matter of deep concern, Jehovah does not keep track of the time.

GOD IS WILLING TO FORGIVE

When it comes to forgiveness, even good friends sometimes struggle. At times, people break off long-standing friendships because they find it too hard to extend forgiveness. Jehovah is not like that. The Bible invites all sincere individuals to ask for his forgiveness, “for he will forgive in a large way.” (Isa. 55:6, 7) What motivates God to forgive so freely?

The reason is God’s incomparable love. He loves the world so much that he has given his Son, Jesus, to rescue humans from

Setting the example, Jehovah is . . .

■ kind and openhanded



■ generous with his time



sin and the harm that it brings to mankind. (John 3:16) In fact, the ransom accomplishes more. By means of Christ's sacrifice, God freely forgives those whom he loves. The apostle John wrote: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins." (1 John 1:9) Because of Jehovah's forgiveness, people can continue to enjoy his friendship, and knowing this touches us deeply.

HE HELPS YOU WHEN YOU NEED HIM

A true friend comes to the aid of others when they need help. Does Jehovah do the same? His Word says: "Although [one of God's servants] may fall, he will not be hurled down, for Jehovah supports him by the hand." (Ps. 37:24) Jehovah 'supports his servants' in various ways. Note this experience from the Caribbean island of St. Croix.

A young girl was pressured by her classmates because for religious reasons she did

not salute the flag. After praying to Jehovah for help, she decided to face the issue. She gave her next report to the class on the subject of flag salute. Using *My Book of Bible Stories*, she explained how the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had a bearing on her decision. She said, "Jehovah protected those three Hebrews because they would not give worship to an image." Then she offered the book to those present. Eleven of her fellow students wanted a copy. Realizing that Jehovah had given her strength and wisdom to give a witness on that sensitive subject, the young girl felt very happy.

If you ever doubt that Jehovah cares for you, meditate on such Bible passages as Psalm 34:17-19; 55:22; and 145:18, 19. Ask longtime Witnesses how Jehovah has cared for them. And when you need God's help, pray to him about the matter. You will soon see how Jehovah "cares for you."

■ willing to forgive



■ there for us when we need him





Appreciating Jehovah as Our Potter

“O Jehovah, . . . you are our Potter; we are all the work of your hand.”—ISA. 64:8.

SONGS: 89, 26

HOW DO WE BENEFIT SPIRITUALLY WHEN WE UNDERSTAND . . .

how Jehovah chooses those whom he will mold?

why Jehovah molds his people?

how God molds those who submit to him?

IN November 2010, a bid of nearly 70 million dollars was made in London, England, for an 18th-century Chinese ceramic vase. Clearly, a potter can turn something as abundant and inexpensive as clay into a beautiful and costly masterpiece. Yet, no human potter can begin to compare with Jehovah. Late in the sixth creative day, God fashioned “out of dust [clay] from the ground” a perfect man and gave him the capacity to reflect his Maker’s qualities. (Gen. 2:7) That perfect man, Adam, who was made from the earth was rightly called a “son of God.”—Luke 3:38.

² Adam, however, lost his sonship when he rebelled against his Maker. Nonetheless, throughout the generations “a great cloud” of Adam’s descendants have chosen to uphold God’s sovereignty. (Heb. 12:1) By humbly submitting to their Creator, they have demonstrated that they wanted him, not Satan, to be their Father and Potter. (John 8:44) Their loyalty to God calls to mind Isaiah’s words concerning repentant Israelites: “O Jehovah, you are our Father. We are the clay, and

1. Why is Jehovah the greatest Potter?

2, 3. How can we imitate the attitude of repentant Israelites?

you are our Potter; we are all the work of your hand.”—Isa. 64:8.

³ Today, all who worship Jehovah in spirit and truth endeavor to reflect the same humble, submissive attitude. They consider it an honor to address Jehovah as Father and to submit to him as their Potter. Do you see yourself as soft clay in God’s hands, willing to be molded into a vessel that is desirable in his eyes? Do you similarly see each of your spiritual brothers and sisters as a work in progress, being molded by God? To help us in that regard, let us consider three aspects of Jehovah’s work as our Potter: How he chooses those whom he molds, why he molds them, and how he does so.

JEHOVAH CHOOSES THOSE WHOM HE MOLDS

⁴ When Jehovah observes humans, he does not pay attention to outward appearances. Rather, he examines the heart, the inner person. **(Read 1 Samuel 16:7b.)** This fact was amply demonstrated when God formed the Christian congregation. He drew to himself and his Son many individuals who from a human standpoint might have seemed to be undesirable. (John 6:44) One such person was a Pharisee named Saul—“a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man.” (1 Tim. 1:13) “The examiner of hearts,” however, did not see Saul as useless clay. (Prov. 17:3) Instead, God saw that he could be molded into a desirable vessel—in fact, “a chosen vessel” to bear witness “to the nations as well as to kings and the sons of Israel.” (Acts 9:15) Others whom God saw as potential vessels “for an honorable use” included

former drunkards, immoral people, and thieves. (Rom. 9:21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11) As they gained accurate knowledge of God’s Word and expressed faith, they allowed Jehovah to mold them.

⁵ How can the foregoing help us? Our faith in Jehovah’s ability to read hearts and to draw to himself those whom *he* chooses should prevent us from judging others, both in our territory and in our congregation. Consider the example of a man named Michael. “When Jehovah’s Witnesses called on me,” he recalls, “I would just turn away and ignore them as if they did not exist. I was really rude! Later, in a different setting, I met a family whom I admired because of their good conduct. Then one day I received a shock—they were Jehovah’s Witnesses! Their behavior moved me to examine the basis for my prejudice. I soon came to the realization that my attitude was based on ignorance and hearsay, not on facts.” To get the facts, Michael accepted a Bible study. Later, he came into the truth and entered the full-time service.

⁶ Our accepting Jehovah as our Potter can affect our attitude toward fellow believers too. Do you see your brothers and sisters as God does—not as a finished product, but as a work in progress? He can see the inner person as well as the kind of person one can become in his capable hands. Hence, Jehovah takes a positive view of people and does not focus on temporary imperfections. (Ps. 130:3) We can imitate him by seeing his servants in a positive light. In fact, we

4. How does Jehovah choose those whom he draws to himself? Give examples.

5, 6. How should our trust in Jehovah as our Potter affect our attitude toward (a) the people in our territory? (b) our brothers and sisters?

can work along with our Potter by supporting our brothers and sisters as they strive to make spiritual advancement. (1 Thess. 5:14, 15) As “gifts in men,” the elders ought to take the lead in this regard.—Eph. 4:8, 11-13.

WHY DOES JEHOVAH MOLD US?

⁷ You may have heard someone say something like this: ‘I never fully appreciated the discipline that I received from my parents until I had children of my own.’ When we gain more experience in life, we may see discipline in a new light and start to view it as Jehovah does, as a manifestation of love. **(Read Hebrews 12:5, 6, 11.)** Yes, out of love for his children, Jehovah patiently molds us. He wants us to be wise and happy and to love him in return. (Prov. 23:15) He takes no pleasure in our suffering; nor does he want us to die as “children of wrath,” which is the prospect inherited from Adam.—Eph. 2:2, 3.

⁸ As “children of wrath,” we once displayed many qualities that displease God, perhaps even some beastlike traits! Yet, thanks to Jehovah’s molding, we changed; we became more like lambs. (Isa. 11:6-8; Col. 3:9, 10) Therefore, the environment in which Jehovah is now molding us is viewed as a spiritual paradise that is presently taking shape. We feel safe and secure despite the wicked world around us. Moreover, in this setting, those of us who grew up in loveless, dysfunctional families finally experience real love. (John 13:35) And we have learned to show love to others. Above all, we have come to know Jehovah and

now experience his fatherly love.—Jas. 4:8.

⁹ In the new world, we will experience to the full the blessings of the spiritual paradise. Then, our spiritual paradise will have its perfect counterpart—a literal paradise under the rulership of God’s Kingdom. During that time of global restoration, Jehovah will continue to mold earth’s inhabitants, educating them to a degree that we might now find hard to imagine. (Isa. 11:9) Furthermore, God will make our minds and bodies perfect, so that we will be able to absorb his teaching and do his will flawlessly. So let us be determined to continue submitting to Jehovah, showing him that we view his molding as an expression of his love for us.—Prov. 3:11, 12.

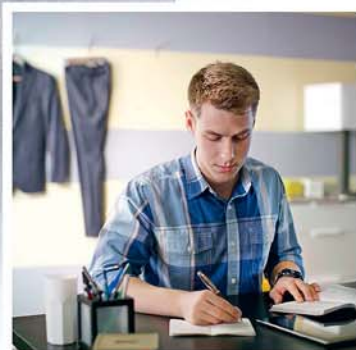
HOW JEHOVAH MOLDS US

¹⁰ Like a highly skilled potter, Jehovah knows the type and quality of “the clay” that is before him, and he molds it accordingly. **(Read Psalm 103:10-14.)** Indeed, he deals with us as individuals, taking into account our particular weaknesses, limitations, and level of spiritual growth. His attitude toward imperfect servants was demonstrated by his Son. Consider how Jesus dealt with his apostles’ shortcomings, especially their inclination to argue among themselves over position. If you had witnessed the apostles’ heated disputes, would you have viewed these men as meek and malleable? Yet, Jesus did not adopt a negative view. He knew that his faithful apostles could be molded by kind, patient counsel and by their observing his example of humility. (Mark 9:33-37; 10:37, 41-45;

7. Why do you appreciate Jehovah’s discipline?

8, 9. How is Jehovah teaching us today, and how will this education continue in the future?

10. How did Jesus reflect the Great Potter’s patience and skill?



Jehovah uses Christian
elders to mold us, but
we must do our part
(See paragraphs 12, 13)

Luke 22:24-27) After Jesus was resurrected and the holy spirit was poured out, the apostles focused, not on position or prominence, but on the work he had given them to do.—Acts 5:42.

¹¹ Jehovah molds his servants today primarily by means of his Word, his holy spirit, and the Christian congregation. God's Word can mold us as we read it purposefully, meditate on it, and ask Jehovah to help us apply it. "I remember you while upon my bed," wrote David. "I meditate on you during the watches of the night." (Ps. 63:6) He also wrote: "I will praise Jehovah, who has given me advice. Even during the night, my innermost thoughts correct me." (Ps. 16:7) Yes, David allowed divine counsel to settle into the deepest parts of his being, to mold his innermost thoughts and feelings, even when the counsel was strong. (2 Sam. 12:1-13) What a fine example of

humility and submissiveness David set for us! Do you too meditate on God's Word, allowing it to settle into your innermost parts? Should you do so even more?—Ps. 1:2, 3.

¹² Holy spirit is able to mold us in a number of ways. For instance, it can help us to develop a Christlike personality, which is characterized by the fruitage of God's spirit. (Gal. 5:22, 23) An aspect of that fruitage is love. We love God and *want* to obey him and be molded by him, recognizing that his commandments are not burdensome. Holy spirit can also give us the strength to resist the molding influence of the world and its bad spirit. (Eph. 2:2) The apostle Paul, who as a young man was deeply influenced by the proud spirit of Jewish religious leaders, could later write: "For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power." (Phil. 4:13) So let us,

11. In what ways did David prove to be like soft clay, and how can we imitate him?

12, 13. How does Jehovah mold us by means of holy spirit and the Christian congregation?

like Paul, keep on asking for holy spirit. Jehovah will not ignore the sincere petitions of the meek.—Ps. 10:17.

¹³ Jehovah uses the Christian congregation and its overseers to mold us on a personal level. For example, if the elders discern that we are having spiritual problems, they try to help us—but not on the basis of human wisdom. (Gal. 6:1) Rather, they humbly look to God, asking for insight and wisdom. With our situation in mind, they act on their prayers by doing research in God’s Word and in our Christian publications. This can equip them to render help tailored to our needs. If they come to you to offer kind, loving help, such as about your style of dress, will you accept their counsel as an expression of *God’s* love for you? In doing so, you prove to be like soft clay in Jehovah’s hands, ready to be molded to your benefit.

¹⁴ Understanding how God may be molding us can help us in our relationships with fellow believers and in our attitude toward people in our territory, including our Bible students. In Bible times, a potter did not dig up some clay and immediately begin to shape it. He first prepared the clay, in part by removing stones and other undesirable matter. In a spiritual sense, God helps to prepare willing individuals so that he can mold them. He does not force them to make changes, but he reveals his righteous standards so that they can clean up their lives or make adjustments voluntarily.

¹⁵ Consider the example of Tessie, a sister in Australia. “Tessie took in knowl-

edge of Bible truth with relative ease,” said the sister who studied with her. “However, she made no significant spiritual progress—not even attending Christian meetings! So after giving the matter much prayerful thought, I decided to stop the study. Then an amazing thing happened. At what I thought would be our last Bible study, Tessie opened her heart to me. She said that she felt like a hypocrite because she enjoyed gambling. But now she had decided to give up this habit.”

¹⁶ Shortly thereafter, Tessie started attending Christian meetings and displaying a Christian personality—even in the face of ridicule from her associates. The sister added: “In time, Tessie was baptized and later served as a regular pioneer, even while she still had young children.” Yes, when Bible students begin to clean up their lives to please God, he will draw close to them and mold them into truly desirable vessels.

¹⁷ To this day, some pottery is still made by hand, the potter working very closely with his material. Likewise, our Potter works closely and patiently with us, molding us with his advice and observing our response. **(Read Psalm 32:8.)** Do you sense Jehovah’s personal interest in you? Do you see yourself being molded in his caring hands? If so, what additional qualities will help you to remain like soft and malleable clay before Jehovah? What traits should you avoid so that you are not hard or inflexible? And how can parents cooperate with Jehovah in molding their children? The following article will address these matters.

14. Though having authority over the clay, how does Jehovah show respect for our free will?

15, 16. How do Bible students show that they want Jehovah to mold them? Illustrate.

17. (a) What appeals to you about having Jehovah as your Potter? (b) What aspects of molding will we next consider?



Do You Let the Great Potter Mold You?

“Look! As the clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand.”—JER. 18:6.

WHEN the Jewish exiles entered ancient Babylon, they saw a city filled with idols and found a people enslaved to wicked spirits. Nevertheless, faithful Jews, such as Daniel and his three companions, refused to be molded by the world of Babylon. (Dan. 1:6, 8, 12; 3:16-18) Daniel and his companions were determined to give exclusive devotion to Jehovah as their Potter. And they succeeded! Daniel lived in Babylon nearly all his life; yet, God’s angel said that he was a “very precious man.”—Dan. 10:11, 19.

² In Bible times, a potter might press the clay into a mold so that it would take on the shape he desired. True worshippers today recognize Jehovah as the Universal Sovereign, the one having authority to mold peoples and nations. (**Read Jeremiah 18:6.**) God also has the authority to mold us personally. However, he recognizes our free will and wants us to submit to him voluntarily. Let us focus on how we can remain like soft clay in God’s hands, considering three areas: (1) How can we avoid traits that might harden us against God’s

1, 2. Why did God consider Daniel to be a “very precious man,” and how can we be obedient like Daniel?

SONGS: 60, 22

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

What traits could harden us against Jehovah’s counsel?

What qualities can help us to remain moldable in God’s hands?

How can Christian parents show that Jehovah is their Potter?

counsel? (2) How can we cultivate qualities that help us to remain soft and submissive? (3) How can Christian parents submit to God when molding their children?

AVOID TRAITS THAT MAY HARDEN THE HEART

³ “Above all the things that you guard, safeguard your heart, for out of it are the sources of life,” says Proverbs 4:23. Against what hardening traits must we be on guard? They include inordinate pride, the practice of sin, and a lack of faith. These could foster a disobedient, rebellious spirit. (Dan. 5:1, 20; Heb. 3:13, 18, 19) King Uzziah of Judah certainly displayed pride. (**Read 2 Chronicles 26:3-5, 16-21.**) At first, Uzziah did “what was right in Jehovah’s eyes,” and “he kept searching for God.” But “as soon as he was strong, his heart became haughty,” even though his strength was from God! He even attempted to burn incense at the temple—a privilege reserved for the Aaronic priests. Then, when the priests confronted him, proud Uzziah became enraged! The result? He had a humiliating “crash” at God’s hands and died a leper.—Prov. 16:18.

⁴ If we failed to guard against pride, we too could begin “to think more of [ourselves] than it is necessary to think,” perhaps even to the point of resisting Scriptural counsel. (Rom. 12:3; Prov. 29:1) Consider the experience of a Christian elder named Jim who disagreed with his fellow elders about a congregation matter. Jim relates: “I told

the brothers that they were not loving, and I left the meeting.” About six months later, he moved to a nearby congregation but was not appointed an elder there. He admits: “I was crushed. My self-righteousness got the better of me, so I quit the truth.” Jim remained spiritually inactive for ten years. He acknowledges: “My pride was hurt, and I began to blame Jehovah for what was happening. Over the years, brothers visited me and tried to reason with me, but I refused their help.”

⁵ Jim’s experience shows how pride can cause us to justify our actions, making us quite the opposite of malleable. (Jer. 17:9) “I just could not stop focusing on how the others seemed to be wrong,” explains Jim. Have you ever been hurt by a fellow Christian or by the loss of certain privileges? If so, how did you respond? Did pride come into play? Or was your main concern that of making peace with your brother and remaining loyal to Jehovah?—**Read Psalm 119:165; Colossians 3:13.**

⁶ Making a practice of sin, perhaps even committing secret sins, can also make one unresponsive to divine counsel. Sinning can then become easier. One brother said that in time his improper conduct did not bother him much at all. (Eccl. 8:11) Another brother, who got into the habit of viewing pornography, later admitted: “I found myself developing a critical attitude toward the elders.” His habit was hurting him spiritually. Eventually, his conduct came to light, and he received much-needed help. Of course, we are all imperfect. If, however, we begin to develop a critical attitude or to excuse a wrong course rather than

3. What traits could harden our heart? Illustrate.

4, 5. What could happen if we failed to guard against pride? Give an example.

6. What can happen if we practice sin?

seek God's forgiveness and help, our heart may already be hardening.

⁷ We find an example of how lack of faith can harden hearts in the case of the Israelites whom Jehovah delivered from Egypt. The nation saw God perform many miracles in their behalf, some truly awe-inspiring! Yet, when the people neared the Promised Land, they showed a lack of faith. Instead of trusting in Jehovah, they became fearful and murmured against Moses. They even wanted to return to Egypt, where they had been slaves! Jehovah was deeply hurt. "How much longer will this people treat me without respect?" he said. (Num. 14:1-4, 11; Ps. 78:40, 41) Because of their hard-heartedness and lack of faith, that generation perished in the wilderness.

⁸ Today, as we approach the new world, *our* faith is being tested. We would do well to assess the quality of our faith. For example, we might examine our view of Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 6:33. Ask yourself: 'Do my priorities and decisions reflect that I truly believe Jesus' words? Would I decide to miss meetings or field service so as to increase my income? What will I do if secular pressures continue to mount? Will I allow the world to squeeze me into its mold—and perhaps right out of the truth?'

⁹ As another example, think about a servant of Jehovah who is somewhat reluctant to follow Bible standards, perhaps regarding associations, disfellowshipping, or entertainment. Ask

yourself, 'Might it be that this is true in my case?' If we detect such a hardening attitude developing within us, we urgently need to examine our faith! "Keep testing whether you are in the faith; keep proving what you yourselves are," the Bible counsels us. (2 Cor. 13:5) Honest self-appraisal in the light of God's Word should be a regular part of our thinking.

REMAIN MOLDABLE

¹⁰ God's provisions to help us remain like soft clay include his Word, the Christian congregation, and the field ministry. As water softens clay, *daily Bible reading and meditation* can help us be malleable in Jehovah's hands. Jehovah required that the kings of Israel write for themselves a copy of God's Law and read it daily. (Deut. 17:18, 19) The apostles realized that reading the Scriptures and meditating on them was essential for their ministry. They quoted from and referred to the Hebrew Scriptures hundreds of times in their writings and encouraged the people to whom they preached to do the same. (Acts 17:11) Today, we too see the importance of reading God's Word daily and prayerfully meditating on it. (1 Tim. 4:15) Doing so helps us to remain humble before Jehovah and be malleable in his hands.

¹¹ By means of the *Christian congregation*, Jehovah is able to mold us according to our individual needs. Jim, mentioned earlier, began to soften his attitude when an elder took a personal interest in him. "Not once did he blame me for my situation or criticize me,"

7, 8. (a) How did the ancient Israelites demonstrate the hardening effect of a lack of faith? (b) What is the lesson for us?

9. Why should we "keep testing" whether we are in the faith, and how can we do so?

10. What can help us to be like soft clay in Jehovah's hands?

11, 12. How can Jehovah use the Christian congregation to mold us according to our individual needs? Illustrate.

comments Jim. “Instead, he remained positive and expressed a sincere desire to help.” After about three months, the elder invited Jim to a Christian meeting. “The congregation warmly welcomed me,” reports Jim, “and their love was a turning point for me. I began to see that my feelings are not the main thing. With the support of the brothers and my dear wife—who never wavered spiritually—I gradually regained my spiritual strength. I also received much encouragement from the articles ‘Jehovah Is Not to Blame’ and ‘Serve Jehovah Loyally,’ found in *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1992.”

¹² In time, Jim was reappointed an elder. Since then, he has helped other brothers to overcome similar trials and to recover spiritually. He concludes: “I

thought I had a solid relationship with Jehovah when in reality I did not! I regret that I allowed pride to blind me to the more important things and cause me to obsess over other people’s faults.” —1 Cor. 10:12.

¹³ How can the *field ministry* mold us for our good? Sharing the good news with others can help us to cultivate humility and various aspects of the fruitage of God’s spirit. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Think of good qualities that you have cultivated in the ministry. What is more, as we display the Christlike personality, we adorn our message, which may affect the attitude of some householders. For example, two Witnesses in Australia listened respectfully to a householder who spoke

13. The field ministry can help us to cultivate what qualities, and with what benefits?

Use God’s provisions
to help you remain
malleable
(See paragraphs 10-13)



very unkindly to them. Later, however, she regretted her manner and wrote to the branch office. In part, she said: “To those two very patient and humble individuals, I would like to convey my apology for my most self-righteous and condescending behaviour. I am a fool to stand before two people spreading God’s Word and attempt to steer them away like that.” Would the householder have written that if the publishers had shown even a hint of anger? Probably not. Yes, how beneficial our ministry is—both for ourselves and for our neighbors!

SUBMIT TO GOD WHEN MOLDING YOUR CHILDREN

¹⁴ Most young children are eager to learn, and they tend to be humble. (Matt. 18:1-4) Accordingly, wise parents can strive to inculcate knowledge of the truth and love for it in the minds and hearts of their little ones. (2 Tim. 3:14, 15) Of course, to succeed, the parents must first impress the truth *on their own hearts*, making the truth their way of life. When parents do this, their children not only hear the truth but also experience it. Moreover, they learn to view parental discipline as an expression of love that reflects Jehovah’s love.

¹⁵ Despite a Christian upbringing, however, some children later leave the truth or are disfellowshipped, causing the family heartache. “When my brother was disfellowshipped,” said a Christian sister in South Africa, “it was as if he had died. It was heartbreaking!” How did she and her parents respond?

14. What must parents do if they want to be truly effective in molding their children?

15, 16. How should parents demonstrate their trust in God if their child is disfellowshipped?

They followed the direction found in God’s Word. **(Read 1 Corinthians 5:11, 13.)** “We resolved to apply the Bible,” said the parents, “recognizing that doing things God’s way would result in the best outcome. We viewed disfellowshipping as divine discipline and were convinced that Jehovah disciplines out of love and to the proper degree. So we kept our contact with our son to absolutely necessary family business.”

¹⁶ How did the son feel? “I knew that my family did not hate me,” he later said, “but they were obeying Jehovah and his organization.” He also stated: “When you are forced to beg Jehovah for help and forgiveness, you realize how much you need him.” Imagine the family’s joy when this young man was reinstated! Yes, when we give attention to God in *all our ways*, we can have the best outcome. —Prov. 3:5, 6; 28:26.

¹⁷ The prophet Isaiah pointed to the time at the end of the Jewish exile when repentant ones would realize: “O Jehovah, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are our Potter; we are all the work of your hand.” Then they would plead: “Do not remember our error forever. Look at us, please, for we are all your people.” (Isa. 64:8, 9) When we likewise humbly submit to Jehovah and make such submission our way of life, he will view us as very precious, just as he did the prophet Daniel. What is more, Jehovah will continue to mold us by means of his Word, spirit, and organization so that one day we will be able to stand before him as perfect “children of God.”—Rom. 8:21.

17. Why should we make submission to Jehovah our way of life, and how will this course benefit us?

Whom do the man with the secretary's inkhorn and the six men with smashing weapons described in Ezekiel's vision symbolize?

■ They picture heavenly forces that were involved in the destruction of Jerusalem and that will also be involved in the destruction of Satan's wicked system at Armageddon. Why is this adjusted understanding reasonable?

After Ezekiel saw the wicked things being done in apostate Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 607 B.C.E., he was given a vision of the events leading up to that destruction. He saw six men with smashing weapons. He also saw a man among them who was "clothed in linen" and had "a secretary's inkhorn." (Ezek. 8:6-12; 9:2, 3) This man was told: "Go through the city, . . . and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the city." Then, the men with the smashing weapons were told to kill all those in the city who did not have the mark. (Ezek. 9:4-7) What does this vision teach us, and who is the man with the secretary's inkhorn?

This prophecy was given in 612 B.C.E., and its initial fulfillment refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army—something that was to occur just five years later. Although the pagan Babylonians were allowed to bring about that destruction, they were serving as Jehovah's executioners. (Jer. 25:9, 15-18) This was because Jehovah used them to punish his apostate people. However, the destruction was not to be indiscriminate. The righteous would not be destroyed along with the wicked. Jehovah lovingly made provision to save those Jews who did not agree with the detestable things happening in the city.

Ezekiel was not involved in either the marking work or the destruction itself. Instead, the execution of judgment would be directed by the angels.

So by means of this prophecy, we are allowed to see behind the scenes, as it were, into the heavenly realm itself. Jehovah had commissioned his angels not only to organize the destruction of the wicked but also to separate the righteous for survival.*

In the past, we have explained that in the modern-day fulfillment of this vision, the man with the secretary's inkhorn represented the anointed remnant. It was thought that those who respond favorably to the message being preached are now marked for survival. In recent years, however, it has become clear that an adjustment needs to be made to this explanation. According to what is stated at Matthew 25:31-33, Jesus is the one who judges people. He makes his final judgment during the time of the great tribulation, separating the sheeplike ones, who will survive, from the goatlike ones, who will be destroyed.

So in light of this adjusted understanding, what lessons do we learn from Ezekiel's vision? There are at least five:

(1) During the time leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel served as a watchman along with Jeremiah, just as Isaiah had previously done. Today, Jehovah is using a small group of his anointed servants to feed his people and warn others before the outbreak of the great tribulation. In turn, all of Christ's domestics have a share in sounding the warning.—Matt. 24:45-47.

(2) Ezekiel was not involved with the actual marking of people for survival; neither are God's servants today. They simply convey Jehovah's

* Although not receiving a visible mark on their foreheads, people such as Baruch (Jeremiah's secretary), Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, and the Rechabites were saved. (Jer. 35:1-19; 39:15-18; 45:1-5) They received a symbolic mark for survival.

message, which is a part of their preaching work, done under angelic direction.—Rev. 14:6.

(3) In Ezekiel's day, no one received a literal mark on his forehead. The same is true today. What do people need to do to be symbolically marked for survival? They need to react favorably to the preaching work that is taking place, put on the Christian personality, dedicate themselves to Jehovah, and loyally support Christ's brothers. (Matt. 25:35-40) Those who do these things will receive the mark of survival during the coming great tribulation.

(4) In the modern-day fulfillment, the man with the secretary's inkhorn represents Jesus Christ, the one behind the scenes who marks those who will survive. The great crowd will receive their mark when they are judged as sheep during the great tribulation. This will put them in

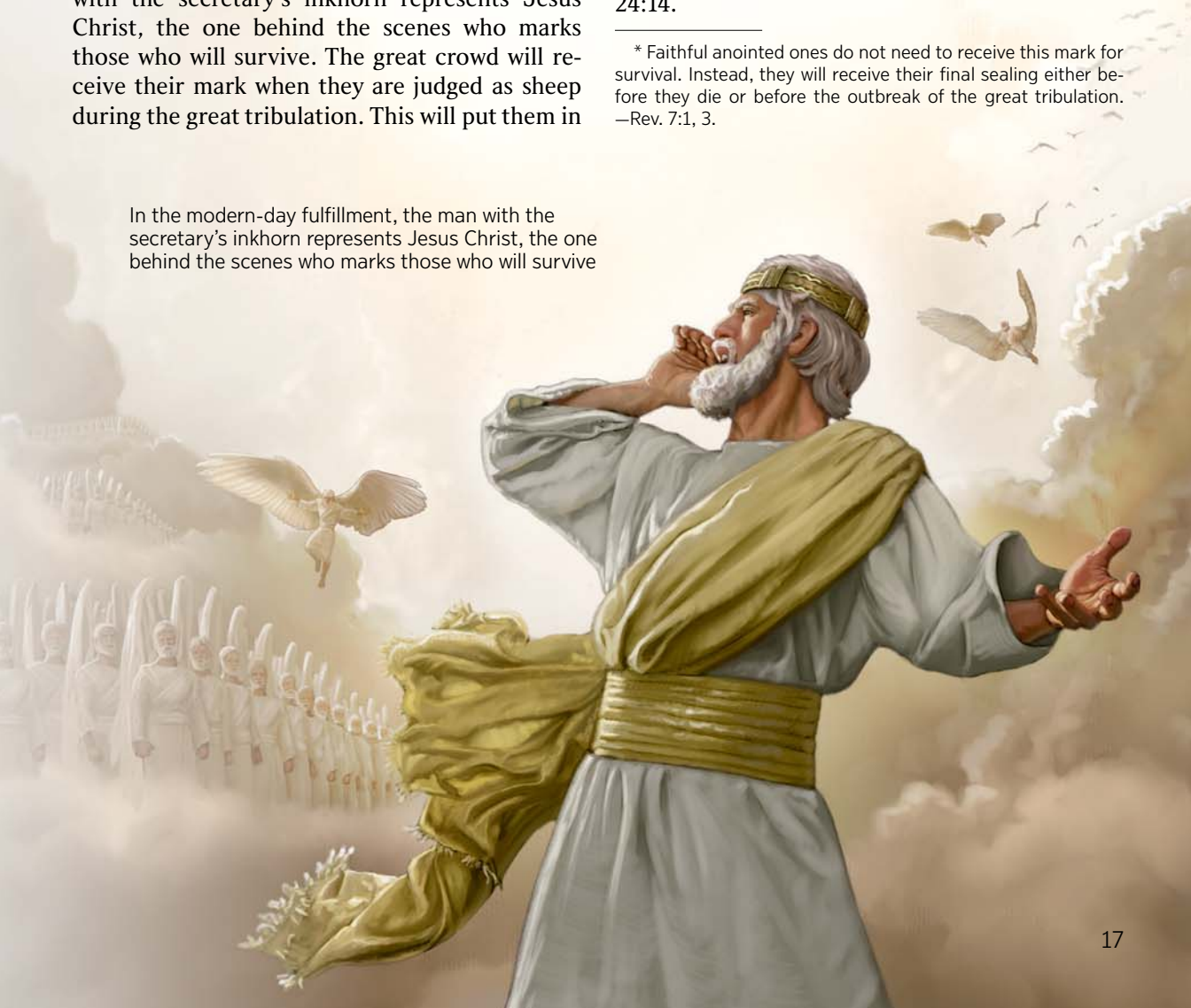
line to receive everlasting life here on earth.—Matt. 25:34, 46.*

(5) In the modern-day fulfillment, the six men with smashing weapons represent Jesus' heavenly armies with Jesus himself at the head. They will soon destroy the nations and all wickedness.—Ezek. 9:2, 6, 7; Rev. 19:11-21.

Understanding these valuable lessons strengthens our confidence that Jehovah does not destroy the righteous along with the wicked. (2 Pet. 2:9; 3:9) We are also reminded of the importance of the preaching work in our day. Everyone needs to hear the warning before the end comes!—Matt. 24:14.

* Faithful anointed ones do not need to receive this mark for survival. Instead, they will receive their final sealing either before they die or before the outbreak of the great tribulation.—Rev. 7:1, 3.

In the modern-day fulfillment, the man with the secretary's inkhorn represents Jesus Christ, the one behind the scenes who marks those who will survive





“Jehovah Our God Is One Jehovah”

“Listen, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.”

—DEUT. 6:4.

SONGS: 138, 112

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

In what sense is Jehovah our God “one Jehovah”?

How can we show that we worship Jehovah as “one Jehovah”?

What can we do to maintain our peace and unity?

FOR centuries, the six words of the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 6:4 have been used by people of the Jewish faith as part of a devotional prayer. They say it daily, morning and evening. This prayer is called the Shema, which is the first word of the verse. With this prayer, devout Jews declare their exclusive devotion to God.

² Those words are part of Moses’ parting speech to the nation of Israel gathered on the plains of Moab in the year 1473 B.C.E. The nation was about to cross the river Jordan to take possession of the Promised Land. (Deut. 6:1) Moses, their leader for the past 40 years, wanted the people to be courageous when facing the challenges ahead. They needed to trust in Jehovah and be faithful to him as their God. Moses’ final words would understandably have a profound effect on the people. After mentioning the Ten Commandments and other regulations that Jehovah had given the nation, Moses

1, 2. (a) Why are the words of Deuteronomy 6:4 well-known? (b) Why did Moses speak those words?

made the powerful declaration found at **Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. (Read.)**

³ Did the Israelites gathered there with Moses not know that Jehovah their God is “one Jehovah”? Of course, they did. Faithful Israelites knew and worshipped only one God—the God of their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That being so, why did Moses call to their attention that Jehovah their God is “one Jehovah”? Does the oneness of Jehovah relate to loving him with one’s whole heart, whole soul, and whole strength, as stated in verse 5? And what meaning do the words of Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 have for us today?

THE ONENESS OF JEHOVAH

⁴ **Unique.** The word “one” in Hebrew and many other languages can mean much more than a simple number. It can imply being unique, the one and only. It does not appear that Moses was here refuting the false religious teachings of a triune god. Jehovah is the Maker of heaven and earth, the Sovereign of the universe. There is no real or true God but him; no other god is like him. (2 Sam. 7:22) Thus, Moses was reminding the Israelites that their worship of Jehovah must be exclusive. They were not to follow the peoples around them, who worshipped various gods and goddesses. Some of those false gods were viewed as ruling over certain parts of nature. Others were separate forms of a particular deity.

⁵ For example, the Egyptians worshipped the sun-god Ra, the sky-goddess

Nut, the earth-god Geb, the Nile-god Hapi, and numerous sacred animals. Many of these false gods were dealt devastating blows by Jehovah through the Ten Plagues. The prominent Canaanite god was Baal, the god of fertility, who also appeared as the god of the sky, rain, and storm. In many places, Baal was the local patron deity as well. (Num. 25:3) The Israelites were to remember that their God, the “true God,” is “one Jehovah.”—Deut. 4:35, 39.

⁶ **Consistent and Loyal.** The word “one” also suggests unity and oneness of purpose and activity. Jehovah God is not divided or unpredictable. Rather, he is always faithful, consistent, loyal, and true. He promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit the Promised Land, and Jehovah performed mighty deeds to fulfill that promise. The passing of 430 years did not diminish Jehovah’s determination to do so.—Gen. 12:1, 2, 7; Ex. 12:40, 41.

⁷ Centuries later, when identifying the Israelites as his witnesses, Jehovah told them: “I am the same One. Before me no God was formed, and after me there has been none.” Emphasizing his unchanging purpose, Jehovah added: “I am always the same One.” (Isa. 43:10, 13; 44:6; 48:12) What an extraordinary privilege for the Israelites—and for us—to be servants of Jehovah, the God who is consistent and loyal in all his ways!—Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17.

⁸ Yes, Moses reminded the people that Jehovah was constant and unchanging

3. What questions will we consider in this article?

4, 5. (a) What is one meaning of the phrase “one Jehovah”? (b) How is Jehovah different from the gods of the nations?

6, 7. What is another meaning of “one,” and how did Jehovah prove to be “one”?

8, 9. (a) What does Jehovah require of his worshippers? (b) How did Jesus emphasize the import of Moses’ words?

in his love and care for them. That being so, it logically followed that they were to render him exclusive devotion, loving him unreservedly with all their heart, soul, and strength. Young ones too were to follow this way of complete devotion because the parents were to teach the children at every opportunity.—Deut. 6: 6-9.

⁹ Because Jehovah is unchanging and constant regarding his will and purpose, it is clear that his fundamental requirements for true worshippers remain the same today. For our worship to be acceptable to him, we too must give him exclusive devotion and love him with our complete heart, mind, and strength. In fact, that is exactly what Jesus Christ told an inquirer. **(Read Mark 12:28-31.)** Let us, therefore, see how we can show by our actions that we truly understand that “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.”

GIVE JEHOVAH EXCLUSIVE DEVOTION

¹⁰ To have Jehovah as our one and only God, we should give him our exclusive devotion. Our worship of him cannot be divided or shared with any other gods nor tinged with ideas or practices from other forms of worship. We must bear in mind that Jehovah is not just one among many gods; nor is he even the highest and most powerful among them. Only Jehovah is to be worshipped.—**Read Revelation 4:11.**

¹¹ In the book of Daniel, we read about the Hebrew youths Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They demonstrated their exclusive devotion to Jehovah

not only by abstaining from eating foods that were unclean but also by refusing to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image. Their priorities were clear; there was no room in their worship for compromise.—Dan. 1:1-3:30.

¹² To give Jehovah exclusive devotion, we must be careful not to allow anything to take, or even to share, the place in our life that Jehovah alone should occupy. What might such things be? In the Ten Commandments, Jehovah made clear that his people must have no other gods besides him and that they must not practice any form of idolatry. (Deut. 5:6-10) Today, idolatry can take many forms, some of which might be hard to recognize. But Jehovah’s requirements have not changed—he is still “one Jehovah.” Let us see what meaning that should have for us.

¹³ At **Colossians 3:5 (read)**, we find strong counsel to Christians regarding what might break their exclusive relationship with Jehovah. Note that greediness is linked to idolatry. That is because the object of one’s desire, such as riches or luxuries, can become so controlling in life that it takes on the role of a powerful god. But when we look at the entire verse, it is not hard to see that all the other sinful practices mentioned are in some way connected with greediness and thus with idolatry. The craving for such things can easily take the place of our love for God. Can we take the risk of allowing any of these things to control us, so that Jehovah is no longer “one Jehovah” to us? No, we cannot.

10, 11. (a) In what sense is our worship of Jehovah exclusive? (b) How did Hebrew youths in Babylon demonstrate their exclusive devotion to Jehovah?

12. In giving Jehovah exclusive devotion, against what must we be on guard?

13. What could we begin to love more than Jehovah?

¹⁴ The apostle John made much the same point when he warned that if anyone loves the things in the world—“the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one’s means of life”—then “the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15, 16) This means that we need to examine our heart constantly to see if it is being enticed by worldly entertainment, associations, and styles of dress and grooming. Or the love of the world might involve efforts to attain “great things,” such as through the pursuit of higher education. (Jer. 45:4, 5) We stand at the threshold of the promised new world. Thus, how important it is that we keep well in mind Moses’ powerful words! If we clearly understand and firmly believe that “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah,” we will do

14. What warning did the apostle John give?

all we can to give him exclusive devotion, serving him as he approves.—Heb. 12:28, 29.

MAINTAIN CHRISTIAN ONENESS

¹⁵ The oneness of Jehovah also implies unity and oneness of purpose, characteristics that we as his worshippers must have as we serve him. The first-century Christian congregation was made up of Jews, Greeks, Romans, and people of other nationalities. They had different religious backgrounds, customs, and sensibilities. Because of that, some had difficulty accepting the new way of worship or fully relinquishing their former ways. The apostle Paul found it fitting to remind them that Christians have one God, Jehovah.—**Read 1 Corinthians 8: 5, 6.**

15. Why did Paul remind Christians that God is “one Jehovah”?

Are you contributing to the oneness of the Christian congregation?
(See paragraphs 16-19)



¹⁶ What about the situation in the Christian congregation today? The prophet Isaiah foretold that “in the final part of the days,” people of all nations would flock to Jehovah’s elevated place of true worship. They would say: “[Jehovah] will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” (Isa. 2:2, 3) How happy we are to see this prophecy undergoing fulfillment before our eyes! The result is that many congregations have become multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual, giving praise to Jehovah. This diversity, however, can present issues that merit our serious consideration.

¹⁷ For example, how do you feel about fellow Christians who are from cultures very different from your own? Their first language, style of clothing, manners, and food may not be what you are accustomed to. Do you tend to shy away from them and associate mainly with those who have a background similar to yours? Or what if those appointed as overseers in your congregation—or in your circuit or branch—are younger or are culturally or racially different from you? Do you allow such matters to undermine the unity and oneness of purpose that should exist among Jehovah’s people?

¹⁸ What can help us to avoid such pitfalls? To the Christians in Ephesus, a prosperous and diversified city, Paul offered some practical counsel. (**Read Ephesians 4:1-3.**) Note that Paul first mentioned such qualities as humility, mildness, patience, and love. These

might be likened to the pillars of a house that keep it standing. But besides having strong pillars, a house needs maintenance, which must be done regularly; otherwise, deterioration could set in. Paul appealed to the Ephesian Christians that they earnestly endeavor to “maintain the oneness of the spirit.”

¹⁹ Each of us should accept it as his or her personal responsibility to contribute to maintaining the oneness in the congregation. What can we do? First, cultivate and display the qualities that Paul mentioned—humility, mildness, patience, and love. Then, put forth earnest effort to promote “the uniting bond of peace.” We should work to repair, as it were, any fissurelike weaknesses that may appear. Doing so, we contribute to the maintenance of our precious peace and unity.

²⁰ “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.” What a powerful statement! That reminder fortified the Israelites to confront the challenges facing them as they entered and took possession of the Promised Land. Our taking those words to heart will empower us to face the great tribulation just ahead and contribute to the Paradise to follow. Let us go on rendering exclusive devotion to Jehovah by loving and serving him whole-souled and putting forth earnest effort to maintain oneness in the Christian brotherhood. If we continue to do so, we can look forward with confidence to seeing fulfilled what Jesus said about those whom he will judge as sheep: “Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world.”—Matt. 25:34.

16, 17. (a) What prophecy is being fulfilled in our day, and with what result? (b) What could undermine our unity?

18, 19. (a) What counsel is mentioned at Ephesians 4:1-3? (b) What can we do to help the congregation stay united?

20. How can we demonstrate that we understand that “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah”?



Do Not Let the Faults of Others Stumble You

“Continue . . . forgiving one another freely.”—COL. 3:13.

JEHOVAH’S faithful servants on earth, his Witnesses, make up an organization that is indeed exceptional. True, it is composed of humans who are imperfect and who have their faults. Still, God’s holy spirit has been moving his global congregation to grow and prosper. Consider a few of the wonderful things that Jehovah has been doing with his willing, although imperfect, people.

² When the last days of the present system began back in 1914, God’s servants on earth were relatively few in number. But Jehovah blessed their preaching work. During the following decades, millions of new ones learned Bible truths and became Jehovah’s Witnesses. Jehovah actually pointed forward to this outstanding growth, saying: “The little one will become a thousand and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, will speed it up in its own time.” (Isa. 60:22) That prophetic statement has certainly come true in these last days. Thus, the number of God’s people on earth is now greater than the entire population of many nations.

1, 2. How did the Bible foretell the increase of Jehovah’s people?

SONGS: 121, 75

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why is God’s organization special?

How does the Bible show that we are all imperfect?

What can we do about our own faults and those of others?

³ During this time, Jehovah has also helped his people to cultivate to a greater degree his dominant quality—love. (1 John 4:8) Jesus, who imitated God’s love, said to his followers: “I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another . . . By this all will know that you are my disciples—if you have love among yourselves.” (John 13:34, 35) This proved especially important in recent history when the nations engaged in deadly wars on a shocking scale. For instance, some 55 million people were killed in World War II alone. However, Jehovah’s Witnesses did not participate in that global slaughter. **(Read Micah 4: 1, 3.)** This has helped them to remain “clean from the blood of all men.”—Acts 20:26.

⁴ The progress of God’s people is taking place in a very hostile world, which the Bible says is controlled by Satan, “the god of this system of things.” (2 Cor. 4:4) He manipulates the political elements of this world, as he does the world’s mass media. But he cannot stop the preaching of the good news. However, knowing that he has only a short time left, Satan tries to turn people away from true worship, and he uses various means to do so.—Rev. 12:12.

A TEST OF LOYALTY

⁵ The Christian congregation emphasizes the importance of having love for God and for fellow humans. Jesus indicated that this would be the case. Responding to a question about the great-

est commandment, he said: “‘You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. The second, like it, is this: ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matt. 22:35-39) Nevertheless, the Bible makes clear that as a result of Adam’s sin, we are all born imperfect. **(Read Romans 5:12, 19.)** So at times some in the congregation may hurt us by what they say or do. This can test our love for Jehovah and for his people. What will we do on such occasions? Even faithful servants of God in the past said or did things that hurt others, and we can learn from what the Bible reveals about this.

⁶ For example, High Priest Eli had two sons who did not uphold Jehovah’s laws. We read: “The sons of Eli were wicked men; they had no regard for Jehovah.” (1 Sam. 2:12) Though their father played a key role in promoting true worship, his two sons committed very serious sins. Eli knew about this and should have disciplined them, but he was lax in that regard. As a result, God adversely judged the household of Eli. (1 Sam. 3:10-14) In time, his descendants would not be allowed to serve as high priests. Had you lived in Eli’s day, how would you have reacted to Eli’s toleration of the sins committed by his sons? Would you have let it stumble you to the point that you would no longer serve God?

⁷ David was loved by Jehovah, who found him to be a man “agreeable to his heart.” (1 Sam. 13:13, 14; Acts 13:22)

3. How have God’s servants shown love?

4. Why is the increase of Jehovah’s people noteworthy?

5. Why may others at times hurt our feelings? (See opening picture.)

6. In what sense did Eli fail to discipline his sons?

7. How did David sin seriously, and what did God do about it?

If you had lived in Israel
at the time of Eli and his sons,
how would you have reacted?
(See paragraph 6)



But David later committed adultery with Bath-sheba, and she became pregnant. That occurred while her husband, Uriah, was away serving in the army. When he came home temporarily, David tried to get him to have sexual relations with Bath-sheba so that it might appear that Uriah was the child's father. Uriah would not do what the king suggested, so David arranged to have him killed in battle. David paid dearly for his crime—calamities came upon him and his household. (2 Sam. 12:9-12) Yet, God showed mercy to this man who overall walked before Jehovah "with integrity of heart." (1 Ki. 9:4) If you had lived among God's people back then, how would you have reacted? Would David's wrong conduct have stumbled you?

⁸ Another Bible example is that of the apostle Peter. Jesus had selected him as one of the apostles; still, Peter at times

8. (a) How did the apostle Peter fail to keep his word? (b) After Peter's mistake, why did Jehovah continue to use Peter?

said or did things that he later regretted. For example, at a critical moment, the apostles abandoned Jesus. Peter had earlier stated that even if the others did that, he would not. (Mark 14:27-31, 50) Nevertheless, when Jesus was being taken into custody, *all* the apostles—including Peter—abandoned him. Peter repeatedly denied even knowing Jesus. (Mark 14:53, 54, 66-72) However, Peter showed remorse, and Jehovah continued to use him. Had you been a disciple then, would Peter's actions have affected your loyalty to Jehovah?

⁹ The above are but a few examples of individuals who did things that hurt others. Many other cases in past centuries and in recent times could be cited in which some who served Jehovah committed bad acts and hurt others. The point is, how will you respond? Will you let their mistakes stumble you, so that you abandon Jehovah and his people,

9. Why do you trust that God is always just?

including those in the local congregation? Or will you recognize that Jehovah may allow time for repentance on the part of wrongdoers and that he will ultimately correct the wrongs and act in a just way? On the other hand, sometimes those who have been guilty of serious sins reject Jehovah's mercy and are unrepentant. In such situations, will you have confidence that Jehovah will in time judge such wrongdoers, perhaps removing them from the congregation?

MAINTAIN LOYALTY

¹⁰ The Bible provides us with accounts of servants of God who remained loyal to Jehovah and his people despite the serious faults of others around them. For example, after spending a night in prayer to his Father, Jesus selected the 12 apostles. Judas Iscariot was one of those. When Judas later betrayed him, Christ did not let that defection mar his own relationship with his Father, Jehovah; nor did Jesus allow Peter's denial to do that. (Luke 6:12-16; 22:2-6, 31, 32) Jesus knew that those actions were not the fault of Jehovah or his people in general. Jesus continued his wonderful work despite the disappointment that some of his followers caused him. Jehovah rewarded him by resurrecting him from the dead, thus opening the way for Jesus to become King of the heavenly Kingdom.—Matt. 28:7, 18-20.

¹¹ Jesus' confidence in Jehovah and his people was well-founded and still is. Indeed, when we consider the things that Jehovah is accomplishing through

his servants in these last days, it is simply amazing. No other people are preaching the truth globally, for others do not have Jehovah guiding them as does his united congregation today. Isaiah 65:14 describes the spiritual condition prevailing among God's people: "Look! My servants will shout joyfully because of the good condition of the heart."

¹² Jehovah's servants rejoice at the good things they can do because they are being guided by Jehovah. In contrast, the world under Satan's influence mourns, as it were, as conditions worsen. It would certainly be unwise and misguided to blame Jehovah or his congregation for the faults of relatively few of God's servants. We need to maintain our loyalty to Jehovah and his arrangements and to learn how to view or react to the faults of others.

HANDLING FAULTS

¹³ How, then, can we handle occasions when one of God's servants says or does something that hurts our feelings? A fine Bible principle is this: "Do not be quick to take offense, for the taking of offense lodges in the bosom of fools." (Eccl. 7:9) We must consider that all of us are some 6,000 years removed from the human perfection that existed in Eden. Imperfect people are prone to make mistakes. Therefore, it would not be good to expect too much of fellow believers and to let their faults rob us of the joy that comes from being part of God's people in these last days. An even greater mistake would be to allow the faults of

10. What did Jesus understand about the faults of Judas Iscariot and Peter?

11. The Bible foretold what about Jehovah's servants in this time?

12. How should we view the faults of others?

13, 14. (a) Why should we be patient with one another? (b) What promise do we want to remember?

others to stumble us and cause us to leave Jehovah's organization. Were that to happen, we would lose not only the privilege of doing God's will but also the hope of life in God's new world.

¹⁴ To maintain our deep joy and firm hope, we want to keep clearly in mind the comforting promise of Jehovah: "Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, nor will they come up into the heart." (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13) Do not let the faults of others prevent you from obtaining such blessings.

¹⁵ However, since we are not yet in the new world, we should consider God's thoughts on how to handle matters when others say or do things that hurt our feelings. For example, one principle to remember is what Jesus said: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; whereas if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Recall, too, that when Peter asked whether we should forgive "up to seven times," Jesus replied: "I say to you, not up to seven times, but up to 77 times." Clearly, Jesus meant that we should always be willing to forgive; this should be our first and predominant leaning.—Matt. 6:14, 15; 18:21, 22.

¹⁶ A good example of how to handle faults was set by Joseph, the first of Jacob's two sons by Rachel. Joseph's ten half brothers were jealous of him because he was favored by their father. Then they sold Joseph into slavery. After many years, the good work that Joseph had done in Egypt resulted in his

becoming second to the ruler of that country. When a famine struck the region, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food but did not recognize him. Joseph could have used his authority to exact vengeance for the very bad way that his brothers had treated him. Instead, he tested his brothers to find out if they had changed their disposition. When he saw that his brothers had truly changed, Joseph identified himself to them. He later said: "Do not be afraid. I will keep supplying you and your little children with food." The Bible account adds: "Thus he comforted them and spoke reassuringly to them."—Gen. 50:21.

¹⁷ It is also wise to remember that since we all have faults, we may be offending others. If we discern that we have done so, the Bible's direction is to go to the one whom we have offended and try to reconcile matters. **(Read Matthew 5:23, 24.)** We appreciate it when others do not hold our faults against us, so we should act the same way toward them. Colossians 3:13 urges us: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely even if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Just as Jehovah freely forgave you, you must also do the same." Christian love "does not keep account of the injury," observes 1 Corinthians 13:5. If we practice forgiving others, Jehovah will forgive us. Yes, when it comes to handling the faults of others, the Christian course is to imitate our merciful Father's dealings with us when we make mistakes.—**Read Psalm 103:12-14.**

15. What did Jesus say we should do when others make mistakes?

16. What good example did Joseph set?

17. What do you want to do when others make mistakes?



A Godly Quality More Precious Than Diamonds

Diamonds have long been prized as precious gems. Some are valued in the millions of dollars. Could it be, however, that from God's standpoint, there are things more precious than diamonds or other gemstones?

Haykanush, an unbaptized publisher living in Armenia, found a passport near her home. Inside the passport were some debit cards and a large sum of money. She told her husband, who like her was an unbaptized publisher.

The couple had serious financial problems and were in debt; yet, they decided to take the money to the address listed in the passport. The man who had lost it was astonished—as was his family. Haykanush and her husband explained that their honesty resulted from what they were learning from the Bible. They felt that they had to be honest, and they used this opportunity to talk about Jehovah’s Witnesses and to leave some literature with the family.

The family wanted to give Haykanush some money as a reward, which she declined. The next day, the wife visited the couple at home and as a token of the family’s appreciation insisted that Haykanush accept a diamond ring.

Like that family, many people would be surprised by the honesty Haykanush and her husband showed. But would Jehovah be surprised? How would he view their honesty? Was their honesty worth the effort?

QUALITIES MORE PRECIOUS THAN MATERIAL THINGS

The answers to those questions are not difficult. The reason is that God’s servants believe that displaying Jehovah’s qualities is more precious in his eyes than diamonds, gold, or other material things. Yes, Jehovah’s view of what is precious and what is not differs from that of most humans. (Isa.

55:8, 9) And as for his servants, reflecting Jehovah’s qualities in fuller measure is a priceless achievement.

We can see this from what the Bible says about discernment and wisdom. Proverbs 3:13-15 says: “Happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who acquires discernment; to gain it is better than gaining silver, and having it as profit is better than having gold. It is more precious than corals; nothing you desire can compare to it.” Clearly, there is no doubt that Jehovah values such qualities more than any material treasures.

What, then, about honesty?

Well, Jehovah himself is honest; he “cannot lie.” (Titus 1:2) And he inspired the apostle Paul to write to the Hebrew Christians in the first century: “Keep praying for us, for we trust we have an honest conscience, as we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things.”—Heb. 13:18.

Jesus Christ set a good example of honesty. Recall, for instance, when High Priest Caiaphas exclaimed: “I put you under oath by the living God to tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God!” Jesus honestly identified himself as the Messiah, even though his truthful admission could allow the Sanhedrin to claim that he was a blasphemer and could lead to his execution.—Matt. 26:63-67.

What about us? Will we be honest in situations where a slight omission or twist of words might bring us material gain?

HONESTY—THE CHALLENGE

Admittedly, it is difficult to be honest in these last days when many are “lovers of themselves, lovers of money.” (2 Tim. 3:2)

A financial crisis or uncertainty about employment has an impact on honesty. Many think that they are justified in stealing, cheating, or engaging in other dishonest practices. This notion is so widespread that when material gain is involved, many think that being honest is simply out of the question. Even some Christians have made poor decisions in this area and for ‘dishonest material gain’ have lost their good standing in the congregation.—1 Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:7.

The vast majority of Christians, however, imitate Jesus. They realize that godly qualities are more important than *any* riches or advantages. Thus, Christian youths do not cheat to obtain good grades at school. (Prov. 20:23) True, being honest may not always lead to being rewarded, as was Haykanush. Nevertheless, being honest is right in God’s eyes, and it enables us to maintain a clean conscience, which is truly valuable.

Gagik’s example well illustrates that. He says: “Before becoming a Christian, I was working for a large company where the owner evaded paying taxes by reporting only a small portion of the company’s profit. As managing director, I was expected to come to ‘an agreement’ with the tax agent by bribing him to overlook the company’s fraudulent practices. As a result, I had the reputation of being dishonest. When I learned the truth, I refused to continue doing that, even though the job paid very well. Instead, I opened my own business. And from day one, I legally registered my company and paid all my taxes.”—2 Cor. 8:21.

Gagik relates: “My income dropped by about half, so it was a challenge to provide for my family. However, I feel happier now. I have a clean conscience before Jehovah. I am a good example for my two sons, and I have qualified for privileges in the congregation. Among tax auditors and others with whom I do business, I now have the reputation of being an honest man.”

JEHOVAH IS A SOURCE OF HELP

Jehovah loves those who adorn his teaching by displaying his superlative qualities, including honesty. (Titus 2:10) He inspired King David to give this assurance: “I was once young and now I am old, but I have not seen anyone righteous abandoned, nor his children looking for bread.” —Ps. 37:25.

The experience of faithful Ruth bears that out. She stuck to her mother-in-law, Naomi, rather than leave her in her old age. Ruth moved to Israel, where she could worship the true God. (Ruth 1:16, 17) When in Israel, Ruth proved to be honest and hard-working, diligently gleaning as arranged for in the Law. In line with what David later experienced, Jehovah did not leave Ruth and Naomi in want. (Ruth 2:2-18) Significantly, Jehovah did much more than just provide for Ruth materially. He chose her to be an ancestress of King David and even of the promised Messiah!—Ruth 4:13-17; Matt. 1:5, 16.

Some of Jehovah’s servants may find themselves in situations where earning enough for necessities seems very difficult. Rather than look for an easy but dishonest way out, they strive to work hard and be diligent. They thus demonstrate that they

value God’s superlative qualities, including honesty, more than anything material.—Prov. 12:24; Eph. 4:28.

Like Ruth of old, Christians around the globe have shown faith in Jehovah’s power to help. They have put implicit trust in the One who had this promise recorded in his Word: “I will never leave you, and I will never abandon you.” (Heb. 13:5) Jehovah has repeatedly shown that he can and will

help disadvantaged ones who display honesty at all times. He has stayed true to his word of promise about providing life’s necessities.—Matt. 6:33.

Yes, humans may prize diamonds and other objects of value. But we can be sure that to our heavenly Father, our displaying honesty and his other qualities is certainly worth more, yes much more, than any precious gems!



Being honest allows us to maintain a clean conscience and to have freeness of speech in the ministry

Have you carefully read the recent issues of *The Watchtower*?
Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

Why did Jehovah approve of the wars of ancient Israel?

Jehovah is loving. Yet, on occasion, he authorized warfare when wickedness and oppression threatened his people. God alone determined who would engage in warfare and when.—w15 11/1, pp. 4-5.

What important things can parents do to train their teenagers to serve Jehovah?

It is vital that parents have love for their teenage children and show humility by their example. It is also important that the parents show insight and strive to understand their teenagers.—w15 11/15, pp. 9-11.

Why should the pope not be considered Peter's successor?

Matthew 16:17, 18 does not say that the apostle Peter would be head of the Christian congregation. The Bible shows that rather than Peter having primacy, Jesus was to be the cornerstone of the congregation. (1 Pet. 2:4-8)—w15 12/1, pp. 12-14.

We should consider what things before speaking?

To do good with our tongue, we should keep in mind (1) when

to speak (Eccl. 3:7), (2) what to speak (Prov. 12:18), and (3) how to speak (Prov. 25:15).—w15 12/15, pp. 19-22.

What are some dishonest ways that Christians avoid?

True Christians avoid both lying to and slandering others. They do not make false, malicious statements that injure others, and they neither commit fraud nor steal.—wp16.1, p. 5.

Who were the “chief priests” mentioned in the Bible?

The expression “chief priests” evidently refers to principal members of the priesthood, including former high priests who had been deposed.—wp16.1, p. 10.

How should we treat someone who partakes of the Memorial emblems?

Christians do not exalt such partakers. One who is truly anointed would not want to be exalted; nor would he want to publicize his standing with God. (Matt. 23:8-12)—w16.01, pp. 23-24.

What can we learn from how Abraham became God's friend?

Abraham took in knowledge about God, perhaps from Shem.

And Abraham gained experience from the way God dealt with him and his family. We can try to do similarly.—w16.02, pp. 9-10.

How did Bible chapter and verse numbering come about?

The 13th-century cleric Stephen Langton divided the Bible into chapters. Jewish copyists first assigned verses to the Hebrew Bible, and in the 16th century, scholar Robert Estienne did likewise for the Christian Greek Scriptures.—wp16.2, pp. 14-15.

Did Satan physically take Jesus to the temple to tempt him?

We cannot say for sure. Matthew 4:5 and Luke 4:9 could mean that Jesus was taken there in a vision or that he stood on some high place in the temple precinct.—w16.03, pp. 31-32.

In what ways can our Christian ministry be like dew?

Dew forms gradually and is refreshing and life-sustaining. Actual dew is a blessing from God. (Deut. 33:13) The combined effort of God's people in the ministry is similar.—w16.04, p. 4.



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