



# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

JULY 15, 2011

## STUDY EDITION

STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE WEEKS OF:

**August 29–September 4**

Will You Follow  
Jehovah's Loving Guidance?

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

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

## PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES



### STUDY ARTICLES 1, 2 PAGES 10-19 ▲

Jehovah lovingly warns us about negative influences that could cause us to veer off the road that leads to everlasting life. These two articles discuss six bad influences and how we can avoid them.

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

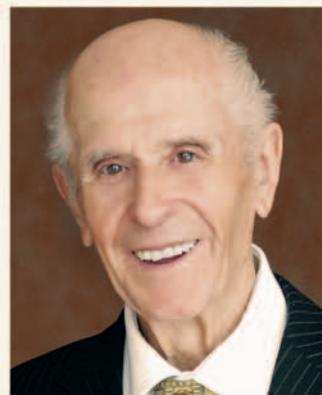
The Bible says that after man's creation, Jehovah "rested" on the seventh day. (Heb. 4:4) The first article in this pair will explain the purpose of God's rest day and why it is relevant to us. The second article will show some ways in which we can prove that we personally have joined Jehovah in his rest.

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# Introducing the Simplified English Edition

WE ARE pleased to announce that for a trial period of one year, beginning with this issue of the study edition of *The Watchtower*, we will publish simultaneously each month a simplified English edition. It will contain the study articles and, as space allows, selected secondary articles. We believe that this will fill a vital spiritual need for many of Jehovah's Witnesses. Why so?

English is the common language spoken by our brothers in such lands as Fiji, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands. Although our brothers in these countries may speak other local, or indigenous, languages, they often use English for everyday communication at congregation meetings and in the field ministry. However, the English they use is simpler than what we use in our publications. Also, there are others of Jehovah's people who have moved to countries where they must use English to communicate even though their knowledge of the language is quite limited. Moreover, they cannot attend congregation meetings conducted in their mother tongue.

The articles that we consider each week at the *Watchtower* Study are the principal means to keep us well-supplied with timely

spiritual food. Therefore, to help all in attendance to benefit fully from this material, the simplified English edition uses a smaller vocabulary with simplified grammar and syntax. This new edition will have a distinctive cover. The subheadings, paragraphs, review questions, and artwork in the study articles will coincide with those in the standard edition. Thus, all can follow along in either edition and participate at the *Watchtower* Study. To show the difference in wording in the two editions, see the example below from paragraph 2 of the first study article in this issue.

It is our hope that this new provision will answer the prayers of many who have said to Jehovah: "Make me understand, that I may learn your commandments." (Ps. 119:73) We are confident that those with a limited knowledge of English, as well as some younger English-speaking children, will thus be able to prepare better for the *Watchtower* Study each week. We give all thanks to Jehovah that out of "love for the whole association of brothers," he is using the "faithful and discreet slave" to give spiritual food in abundance.—1 Pet. 2:17; Matt. 24:45.

*Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses*

## Standard English:

*In this article, we will discuss three negative influences. The first is an external force, the second an internal one. The third is not even real; nonetheless, it is very dangerous. We need to know what these influences are and how our heavenly Father teaches us to resist them.*

## Simplified English:

*In this article, we will talk about three dangers. The first danger comes from other people. The second comes from inside of us. The third comes from something that is not real. We need to learn what these dangers are and how Jehovah helps us to avoid them.*



# A LENGTHY LEGAL STRUGGLE ENDS IN VICTORY!

**I**T BEGAN in 1995 and lasted for 15 years. During all that time, true Christians in Russia were under attack by opposers of freedom of religion. These opposers were determined to have Jehovah's Witnesses outlawed in Moscow and beyond. Even so, Jehovah saw fit to reward the integrity of our dear Russian brothers and sisters with a legal victory. What, though, led up to this confrontation?

## FREEDOM—AT LAST!

During the first half of the 1990's, our brothers in Russia regained the religious freedoms that they lost in 1917. In 1991 they were registered by the government of the Soviet Union as an official religion. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Jehovah's Witnesses were registered in the Russian Federation. Moreover, Witnesses who had suffered religious persecution decades earlier were officially recognized by the State as victims of political oppression. In 1993, Moscow's Department of Justice registered the Moscow Community of Jehovah's Witnesses, as we are legally known there. That same year, Russia's new constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion, also went into effect. No wonder that one brother exclaimed, "We never even dreamed we would see such freedom!" He then continued, "For 50 years we had waited for this!"

The brothers and sisters in Russia used that "favorable season" well by quickly stepping up their preaching activities, and many responded. (2 Tim. 4:2) "People were deeply interested in religion," noted one observer. Before long, the number of publishers, pio-

neers, and congregations multiplied. In fact, from 1990 to 1995, the number of Witnesses in Moscow jumped from some 300 to over 5,000! As the ranks of new servants of Jehovah in Moscow kept swelling, opposers of religious freedom became alarmed. In the mid-1990's, they attacked by instigating a legal war. That struggle would go through four drawn-out stages before it would finally be resolved.

## CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS END WITH A TWIST

The first stage of the struggle began in June 1995. A Moscow-based group that is openly aligned with the Russian Orthodox Church filed a complaint accusing our brothers of engaging in criminal activities. The group claimed to be acting on behalf of family members who resented that their spouses or children had become Witnesses. In June 1996, investigators began searching for evidence of wrongdoing, but they found none. Still, the same group filed another complaint—again accusing our brothers of criminal acts. Investigators conducted another inquiry, but all accusations were refuted. Even so, the opposers filed a third complaint, based on the same charges. Again, Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow were investigated, but the prosecutor came to the same conclusion—there were no grounds for starting a criminal case. Then the opposers filed the same complaint a fourth time, and once again, the prosecutor found no evidence. Incredibly, the same group requested another investigation. Finally, on April 13, 1998, the new investigator closed the case.

"But then," says a lawyer involved in the case, "something bizarre happened." Although the representative of the prosecutor's office that conducted this fifth investigation admitted that there was no evidence of criminal activity, she still advised that a civil suit be brought against our brothers. The representative alleged that the Moscow Community of Jehovah's Witnesses violated national and international law. The prosecutor of the Northern Administrative Circuit of Moscow agreed and filed a civil complaint.\* On September 29, 1998, hearings started in Moscow's Golovinsky District Court. The second stage had begun.

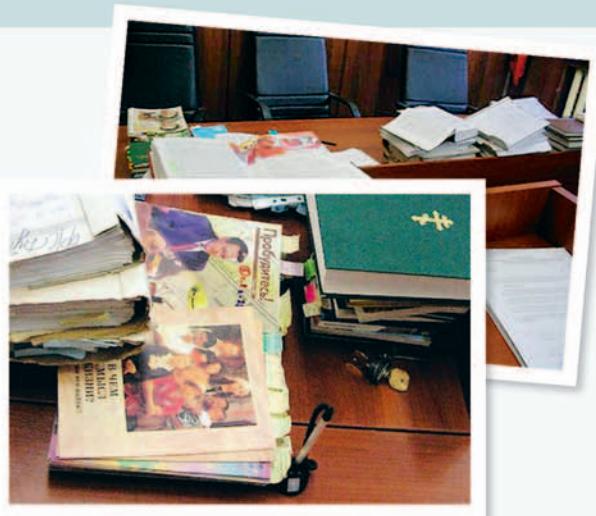
### THE BIBLE IN COURT

In a cramped courtroom in northern Moscow, Prosecutor Tatyana Kondratyeva launched the attack, using a federal law signed in 1997 that describes Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism as traditional religions.<sup>#</sup> The same law, in practice, has made it difficult for other religions to obtain legal recognition. It also allows courts to ban religions that promote hatred. Using this law, the prosecutor falsely alleged that Jehovah's Witnesses promote hatred and destroy families and therefore should be banned.

A lawyer defending our brothers asked: "Who are the individuals in the Moscow Congregation who are guilty of violating the law?" The prosecutor could not supply one name. She claimed, though, that the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses incites religious enmity. To prove her point, she read from the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines and

\* The complaint was filed on April 20, 1998. Two weeks later, on May 5, Russia ratified the European Convention on Human Rights.

<sup>#</sup> "The law was adopted under strong pressure from the Russian Orthodox Church, which is jealously guarding its position in Russia and is eager to see a ban on Jehovah's Witnesses."—Associated Press, June 25, 1999.



other publications (see above). When asked in what way these publications cause enmity, she said: "Jehovah's Witnesses teach that they have the true religion."

A lawyer, one of our brothers, handed a copy of the Bible to the judge and a copy to the prosecutor and read Ephesians 4:5: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Before long, the judge, the prosecutor, and the lawyer—all with Bible in hand—were discussing such scriptures as John 17:18 and James 1:27. The court asked: "Do these scriptures incite religious enmity?" The prosecutor answered that she was not competent to comment on the Bible. The lawyer showed publications of the Russian Orthodox Church that severely criticize Jehovah's Witnesses and asked: "Do these statements violate the law?" The prosecutor replied: "I am not competent to comment on clerical arguments."

### THE PROSECUTION FALTERS

In accusing the Witnesses of destroying families, the prosecutor stated that they do not celebrate such holidays as Christmas. However, she later admitted that Russian law does not require citizens to celebrate Christmas. Russians—including Russian Witnesses of Jehovah—have a choice. The prosecutor also asserted that our organization 'deprives



## Why a Russian Verdict Is Reviewed in France

On February 28, 1996, Russia signed the European Convention on Human Rights. (On May 5, 1998, Russia ratified the Convention.) By signing that treaty, Russia's government declared that its subjects have

**'the right to freedom of religion and the right to practice their religion at home and in public and to change their religion if they want to do so.'—Article 9.**

**'the right to say and write in a responsible way what they think and to give information to others.'**  
—Article 10.

**'the right to take part in peaceful meetings.'**—Article 11.

Individuals or organizations who are victims of violations of the treaty and who have exhausted all domestic legal avenues can bring their case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France (shown above). It is made up of 47 judges—a number equal to the number of countries that signed the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court's judgments are binding. Countries that signed the treaty must comply with the judgments.

children of normal rest and emotional joys.' Still, when questioned, she admitted that she had never talked to any youths raised by Witness parents. When a lawyer asked the prosecutor if she had ever attended the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, she answered: "There was no need."

The prosecution presented a professor of psychiatry as an expert witness. He alleged that reading our literature causes mental problems. When a defense lawyer noted that the professor's written statement to the court was identical to a document prepared by the Moscow Patriarchate, the professor admitted that some parts were the same, word for word. "We work from one disquette," he said. Further questioning revealed that he had never treated one of Jehovah's Witnesses. In contrast, another professor of psychiatry testified in court that he had studied more than 100 Witnesses in Moscow. He found that the group possessed normal mental health, adding that the members of the group had grown more tolerant of other religions since they had become Witnesses.

### VICTORY—BUT NOT FINAL

On March 12, 1999, the judge appointed five academics to study the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses, and she suspended the trial. Unrelated to the Moscow trial, the Justice Ministry of Russia's federal government had already ordered a panel of academics to study our literature. This panel commissioned by the Ministry reported on April 15, 1999, that they had found nothing harmful in our publications. So on April 29, 1999, the Justice Ministry renewed the national registration of Jehovah's Witnesses. Even with this new positive study in hand, the Moscow court insisted that a new panel examine our literature. This caused a strange situation

—Jehovah’s Witnesses were recognized nationally by Russia’s Ministry of Justice as an approved religion abiding by the law but, at the same time, were being investigated by Moscow’s Department of Justice for allegedly breaking the law!

Nearly two years passed before the trial resumed, and on February 23, 2001, Judge Yelena Prokhorycheva reached a verdict. After considering the findings of the panel that she had appointed, she ruled: “There is no basis for the liquidation and banning of the activity of the religious community of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Moscow.” Finally, it was legally established that our brothers were innocent of all accusations leveled against them! However, the prosecutor rejected the verdict and appealed to the Moscow City Court. Three months later, on May 30, 2001, that court annulled the decision of Judge Prokhorycheva. It ordered a retrial to be handled by the same prosecutor but presided over by a different judge. Stage three was about to begin.

#### DEFEAT—BUT NOT FINAL

On October 30, 2001, Judge Vera Dubinskaya began the retrial.\* Prosecutor Kondratyeva rehashed the charge that Jehovah’s Witnesses promote hatred, but then she added that banning the legal community of Jehovah’s Witnesses was a means to protect the rights of the Witnesses in Moscow! In response to that outlandish claim, all 10,000 Witnesses in Moscow immediately signed a petition asking the court to reject the prosecutor’s offer of “protection.”

The prosecutor stated that there was no need for her to provide evidence to prove that the Witnesses were guilty of wrong-

\* Ironically, that same date marked the tenth anniversary of the passing of a law in Russia that recognized Jehovah’s Witnesses as victims of religious oppression under Soviet rule.

doing. The trial, she said, was about the literature and beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses, not their activities. She announced that she would present a spokesman of the Russian Orthodox Church as an expert witness. Of course, that announcement confirmed that members of the clergy were indeed deeply involved in the drive to ban the Witnesses. On May 22, 2003, the judge ordered that a panel of experts study the publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses—again.

On February 17, 2004, the trial resumed to review the results of the panel’s study. The experts found that our publications encourage readers to “preserve the family and the marriage arrangement” and that the claim that our literature promotes hatred was “unsupported.” Other scholars agreed. A professor of religious history was asked: “Why do Jehovah’s Witnesses preach?” He answered the court: “The preaching work is a must for a Christian. That is what the Gospel states and that is what Christ commissioned his disciples to do—‘go and preach in all lands.’” Nonetheless, on March 26, 2004, the judge banned the activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Moscow. On June 16, 2004, the Moscow City Court upheld the decision.\* Commenting on the verdict, a longtime Witness observed: “In Soviet times, a Russian had to be an atheist. Today, a Russian must be Orthodox.”

How did the brothers react to the ban? Much like Nehemiah of old. In his day, when enemies of God’s people opposed his efforts to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall, Nehemiah and his people did not let themselves become sidetracked by any form of opposition. Instead, they “kept building” and “continued

\* The ban liquidated the registered legal entity used by the congregations in Moscow. The opposers hoped that the liquidation would hamper our brothers in carrying out their ministry.

## The Court's Judgment

Here are three brief excerpts from the Court's judgment.

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One charge alleged that Jehovah's Witnesses break up families. The Court decided otherwise. It stated:

**"It is the resistance and unwillingness of non-religious family members to accept and to respect their religious relative's freedom to manifest and practise his or her religion that is the source of conflict."—Par. 111.**

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The Court also found no evidence to support the charge of "mind control," stating:

**"The Court finds it remarkable that the [Russian] courts did not cite the name of a single individual whose right to freedom of conscience had allegedly been violated by means of those techniques."—Par. 129.**

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Another charge stated that by not accepting blood transfusions, Jehovah's Witnesses damage the health of believers. The Court ruled to the contrary, stating:

**"The freedom to accept or refuse specific medical treatment, or to select an alternative form of treatment, is vital to the principles of self-determination and personal autonomy. A competent adult patient is free to decide, for instance, whether or not to undergo surgery or treatment or, by the same token, to have a blood transfusion."—Par. 136.**

to have a heart for working." (Neh. 4:1-6) Similarly, our brothers in Moscow did not let opposers sidetrack them from the work that is to be carried out today—the preaching of the good news. (1 Pet. 4:12, 16) They were confident that Jehovah would look after them, and they were ready to take on the fourth stage in this lengthy struggle.

### INCREASE IN HOSTILITY

On August 25, 2004, our brothers delivered a petition to the Kremlin addressed to Vladimir Putin, then president of Russia. The petition, expressing deep concern about the ban, consisted of 76 volumes and contained over 315,000 signatures. Meanwhile, the Russian Orthodox clergy showed their true colors. A spokesman for the Moscow Patriarchy declared: "We are very much against the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses." A Muslim leader said that the ruling on the ban was "a milestone and positive event."

Not surprisingly, deluded elements of Russian society felt emboldened to attack Jehovah's Witnesses. Some Witnesses sharing in the preaching work in Moscow were punched and kicked by opposers. An enraged man chased a sister out of a building and kicked her so violently in the spine that she fell and hit her head. She required medical help; yet, the police took no action against her attacker. Other Witnesses were arrested by the police, fingerprinted, photographed, and held in custody overnight. Managers of meeting places in Moscow were threatened with dismissal if they continued to rent their halls to the Witnesses. Before long, numerous congregations lost their rented meeting places. Forty congregations have had to share the same Kingdom Hall complex of four halls. One congregation using that facility had to hold the Public Meeting at half past seven in the morning. "To attend, the publishers had to get up at five o'clock," related a

traveling overseer, “but they did so willingly for more than a year.”

### “FOR A WITNESS”

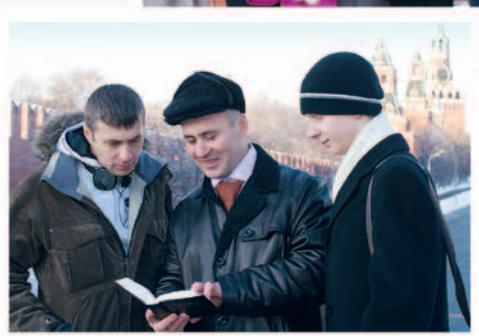
To establish that the Moscow ban was unlawful, in December 2004 our lawyers sought relief from the European Court of Human Rights. (See the box “Why a Russian Verdict Is Reviewed in France,” on page 6.) Six years later, on June 10, 2010, the Court handed down a unanimous decision completely exonerating Jehovah’s Witnesses!\* The Court took note of all accusations made against us and found them to be totally groundless. It also stated that Russia had a legal obligation to “put an end to the violation found by the Court and to redress as far as possible the effects.”—See the box “The Court’s Judgment,” on page 8.

The Court’s well-articulated conclusions on how the European Convention on Human Rights protects the practices of Jehovah’s Witnesses are binding not just on Russia but also on the 46 other nations that are members of the Council of Europe. Even more than that, because of the breadth and scope of the analysis of the law and the facts, it will be read with interest by legal scholars, judges, legislators, and human rights specialists around the world. Why is this? In reaching its decision, the Court referred not only to eight decisions it had previously handed down in favor of Jehovah’s Witnesses but also to nine victories earlier won by Jehovah’s Witnesses before the highest courts of Argentina, Canada, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These references and the Court’s robust refutations of the accusa-

\* On November 22, 2010, a five-judge panel of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights rejected Russia’s petition requesting that the case be referred to the Court’s Grand Chamber. In doing so, the June 10, 2010, judgment became final and enforceable.

tions made by the Moscow prosecutor provide the worldwide community of Jehovah’s Witnesses with a powerful tool to use in defense of their faith and practices.

Jesus told his followers: “You will be haled before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them and the nations.” (Matt. 10: 18) The legal struggle that took place during the last decade and a half offered our brothers the opportunity to make Jehovah’s name known as never before in Moscow and beyond. The attention focused on the Witnesses by the investigations, the court cases, and the verdict of an international court has indeed been “for a witness” and has contributed to “the advancement of the good news.” (Phil. 1:12) In fact, when the Witnesses in Moscow share in the preaching work today, many householders react, saying, “But did they not ban you people?” That question often gives our brothers an opportunity to provide the householders with more information about our beliefs. Clearly, no opposing force can stop us from our Kingdom-preaching activity. We pray that Jehovah continues to bless and sustain our beloved and courageous brothers and sisters in Russia.



# WILL YOU FOLLOW JEHOVAH'S LOVING GUIDANCE?

*"Every false path I have hated."*—PS. 119:128.

**I**MAGINE this: You need to travel to a certain destination. For guidance, you turn to a trusted friend who knows the way. As he gives you thorough directions, he might say something like this: "Be careful about that next turn. The sign is misleading. A lot of people follow it and wind up getting lost." Would you appreciate his concern and heed the warning? In some ways, Jehovah is like that friend. He gives us careful directions about how to reach our destination of everlasting life, but he also warns us about bad influences that could cause us to go the wrong way.—Deut. 5:32; Isa. 30:21.

<sup>2</sup> In this and the following article, we will discuss some influences about which our Friend, Jehovah God, warns us. Let us keep in mind that Jehovah gives such warnings out of concern and love. He wants us to reach our destination. It pains him to see people giving in to bad influences and losing their way. (Ezek. 33:11) In this article, we will discuss three negative influences. The first is an external force, the second an internal one. The third is not even real; nonetheless, it is very dangerous. We need to know what these influences are and how our heavenly Father teaches us to resist them. One inspired psalmist said to Jehovah: "Every false path I have hated." (Ps. 119:128) Do you feel the same way? Let us see how we can intensify such feelings and act on them.

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1, 2. (a) In seeking guidance to reach a destination, what kind of warning might you appreciate, and why? (b) What kinds of warnings does Jehovah offer those who serve him, and why?

## Do Not Follow "After the Crowd"

<sup>3</sup> In taking a long journey, what would you do if you felt unsure about which way to go? You might feel tempted to follow other travelers—especially if you saw a great many making the same choice. Such a course is risky. After all, those travelers may not be heading toward your destination, or they too may be lost. In this connection, consider a principle that underlies one of the laws given to ancient Israel. Those who served as judges or as witnesses in judicial matters were warned of the danger of 'following after the crowd.' (*Read Exodus 23:2.*) Without doubt, it is all too easy for imperfect humans to bow to peer pressure, perverting justice. However, is the principle about not following the crowd restricted to judicial matters? Not at all.

<sup>4</sup> In truth, the pressure to "follow after the crowd" can affect us at almost any time. It may arise suddenly, and it can be very difficult to resist. Think, for example, of the peer pressure that Joshua and Caleb once faced. They were part of a group of 12 men who went into the Promised Land to spy it out. Upon their return, ten of those men gave a very negative and discouraging report. They even claimed that some of the land's inhabitants were giants descended

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3. (a) Why might it be dangerous to follow other travelers when we are unsure about which way to go? (b) What important principle do we find at Exodus 23:2?

4, 5. How were Joshua and Caleb pressured to follow the crowd, but what enabled them to resist?



*Are you ever tempted to follow the crowd?*

from the Nephilim, the offspring of rebel angels and women. (Gen. 6:4) Now, that claim was absurd. Those wicked hybrids had been wiped out in the Deluge many centuries earlier, leaving not a single descendant behind. But even the most baseless ideas can exert power over those weak in faith. The negative reports from those ten spies quickly spread fear and panic among the people. Before long, most were sure that it would be a mistake to enter the Promised Land as Jehovah had directed. In that volatile situation, what did Joshua and Caleb do?—Num. 13:25-33.

<sup>5</sup> They did not go following after the crowd. Although the crowd hated to hear it, those two men told the truth and stuck to it—even when threatened with death by stoning! Where did they get the courage? No doubt, a good part of it came from their faith. People with faith see clearly the difference between the baseless claims of men and the sacred promises of Jehovah God. Both men later expressed how they felt about Jehovah's record in fulfilling his every promise. (**Read Joshua 14:6, 8; 23:2, 14.**) Joshua and Caleb were attached to their faithful God, and they could not imagine

hurting him for the sake of following a faithless crowd. So they stood firm, setting a sterling example for us today.—Num. 14:1-10.

<sup>6</sup> Do you ever feel pressured to follow after the crowd? People who are alienated from Jehovah and who scoff at his moral standards certainly form a vast crowd today. When it comes to entertainment and recreation, that crowd often promote baseless ideas. They may insist that the immorality, violence, and spiritism so prevalent in television programs, movies, and video games are harmless. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) When you choose entertainment and recreation for yourself or your family, do you allow the lax consciences of others to influence your decisions and to mold your conscience? Would that not, in effect, amount to following after the crowd?

<sup>7</sup> Jehovah has given us a precious gift to help us make decisions—our “perceptive powers.” However, these powers need to be trained “through use.” (Heb. 5:14)

6. In what ways might we feel pressured to follow the crowd?

7, 8. (a) How are our “perceptive powers” trained, and why is such training more useful than following a host of rigid rules? (b) Why do you find the example of many Christian youths heartwarming?

Following the crowd would not train our perceptive powers; nor, on the other hand, would a host of rigid rules in matters of conscience. That is why, for example, Jehovah's people are not given a list of films, books, and Internet sites to avoid. Because this world changes so fast, such a list would be outdated soon after it was made. (1 Cor. 7:31) Worse, it would deprive us of the vital work of weighing Bible principles carefully and prayerfully and then making decisions on the basis of those principles.—Eph. 5:10.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, our Bible-based decisions may at times make us unpopular. Christian youths in school may face strong pressure from the crowd to see and do what everyone else is seeing and doing. (1 Pet. 4:4) Therefore, it is beautiful to see Christians young and old imitating the faith of Joshua and Caleb, refusing to follow after the crowd.

### **Do Not Follow “Your Hearts and Your Eyes”**

<sup>9</sup> The second dangerous influence we will discuss is an internal one. We might illustrate it this way: If you were taking a journey to a particular destination, can you imagine deciding to cast aside your map and simply follow your impulses—perhaps turning onto every road that seemed to offer pretty views? Clearly, giving in to such impulses would keep you from reaching your goal. In this regard, consider another of Jehovah's laws to ancient Israel. Many today might find a law about putting fringes and blue threads on their garments hard to understand. (***Read Numbers 15:37-39.***) Do you see the relevance, though? Obeying such a law helped God's people to keep themselves distinct

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9. (a) In the course of a journey, why might it be dangerous simply to follow our urges and impulses?
  - (b) Why was the law found at Numbers 15:37-39 relevant to God's ancient people?

and separate from the pagan nations around them. That was vital if they were to gain and maintain Jehovah's approval. (Lev. 18:24, 25) However, that law also reveals a dangerous internal influence that might lead us away from our destination of everlasting life. How so?

<sup>10</sup> Note what Jehovah gave his people as a reason behind this law: “You must not go about following your hearts and your eyes, which you are following in immoral intercourse.” Jehovah has profound insight into human nature. He well knows how easily our heart, or inner self, is seduced by what we take in through our eyes. The Bible thus warns us: “The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate. Who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9) Do you see, then, just how fitting was Jehovah's warning to the Israelites? He well knew that they would be inclined to look at the pagan peoples around them and be seduced by what they saw. They might be tempted to look like those unbelievers and then to think, feel, and act like them.—Prov. 13:20.

<sup>11</sup> In our own day, it is even easier for our treacherous heart to be seduced by our physical senses. We live in a world that is geared toward appealing to fleshly inclinations. So how can we apply the principle behind Numbers 15:39? Consider: If those around you at school, at the workplace, or in your community are dressing more and more provocatively, might you be affected? Might you be tempted to ‘follow your heart and eyes’ and be seduced by what you see? Then might you be tempted to lower your own standards by dressing in a similar manner? —Rom. 12:1, 2.

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10. How has Jehovah shown insight into human nature?
  11. In what way might we be seduced by our physical senses?

<sup>12</sup> We urgently need to cultivate self-control. If our eyes tend to wander where they should not, let us recall the firm resolve of faithful Job, who made a formal agreement with his own eyes—a firm decision not to give romantic attention to a woman not his own wife. (Job 31:1) Similarly, King David resolved: “I shall not set in front of my eyes any good-for-nothing thing.” (Ps. 101:3) Whatever might damage our clean conscience and our relationship with Jehovah is for us a “good-for-nothing thing.” That would include any temptation that appeals to our eyes and threatens to seduce our heart into wrongdoing.

<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, we certainly would never want to become, in a sense, a “good-for-nothing thing” to others by tempting them to contemplate wrongdoing. We

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12, 13. (a) What should we do if our eyes tend to wander where they should not? (b) What can move us to avoid becoming a source of temptation to others?



therefore take seriously the Bible’s inspired counsel to wear well-arranged and modest clothing. (1 Tim. 2:9) Modesty is not something we can simply define in a way that suits us. We need to take into account the consciences and sensitivities of those around us, putting their peace of mind and welfare ahead of our own preferences. (Rom. 15:1, 2) The Christian congregation is blessed with many thousands of young people who set sterling examples in this regard. How proud they make us as they refuse to ‘follow their hearts and their eyes,’ choosing instead to please Jehovah in all that they do—even in the way they dress!

#### **Do Not Follow “Unrealities”**

<sup>14</sup> Imagine that your journey took you across a vast desert. What would happen if you veered off the road to pursue a mirage? Pursuing that illusion could cost you your life! Jehovah well knows that danger. Consider an example. The Israelites wanted

to be like the nations around them, who were ruled by human kings. That desire was, in fact, a grave sin, for it amounted to a rejection of Jehovah as their King. Although Jehovah allowed them to have a human king, he had his prophet Samuel deliver a pointed warning about pursuing “unrealities.”—*Read 1 Samuel 12:21.*

<sup>15</sup> Did those people think that a human king would

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14. What warning about pursuing “unrealities” did Samuel deliver?

15. In what ways did the Israelites pursue unrealities?

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*Why is it dangerous to follow an impulse?*



*Are you pursuing any unrealities?*

somewhat be more real, more dependable, than Jehovah? If so, they were truly pursuing an unreality! And they were in danger of pursuing many other satanic illusions. Human kings would easily lead them into idolatry. Idolaters make the mistake of thinking that physical objects—gods made of wood or stone—are somehow more real, more reliable, than the invisible God, Jehovah, who created all things. But as the apostle Paul noted, idols are “nothing.” (1 Cor. 8:4) They cannot see, hear, speak, or act. You might be able to see them and touch them, but if you were to worship one, you would, indeed, be pursuing an unreality—an empty illusion that would bring only disaster.—Ps. 115:4-8.

<sup>16</sup> Satan is still adept at convincing people to pursue unrealities. For instance, he has seduced innumerable people into looking to material things to provide security. Money, possessions, and high-paying jobs may seem to deliver advantages. What do materi-

16. (a) How does Satan lure many today into pursuing unrealities? (b) Why can we say that material things are unrealities, especially in comparison with Jehovah God?

al things deliver, though, when health fails, when the economy crumbles, or when a natural disaster strikes? What do they deliver when people feel empty inside, in need of purpose, direction, and answers to life’s deeper questions? What relief can they deliver in the face of death? If we look to material things to fill spiritual needs, we will be disappointed. Material possessions do not deliver; they are unrealities. In the long run, they cannot even provide physical security, for they have no lasting effect on the present brevity of human life or the likelihood of sickness and death. (Prov. 23:4, 5) How much more real, then, is our God, Jehovah! Only in a strong relationship with him can we find genuine security. What a precious blessing that is! Let us never forsake him in the pursuit of unrealities.

<sup>17</sup> Are we not blessed to have Jehovah as our Friend and Guide on life’s journey? If we continue to heed his loving warnings against three bad influences—the crowd, our own hearts, and unrealities—we will be much more likely to reach our destination of everlasting life. In the following article, let us consider three more warnings that Jehovah provides to help us hate and avoid the false paths that lead so many astray.—Ps. 119:128.

17. What is your resolve regarding the negative influences we have discussed?

### What Do You Think?

How can you make personal application of the principles revealed in the following scriptures?

- Exodus 23:2
- Numbers 15:37-39
- 1 Samuel 12:21
- Psalm 119:128

# WILL YOU HEED JEHOVAH'S CLEAR WARNINGS?

*"This is the way. Walk in it, you people."*—ISA. 30:21.

A ROAD sign that is pointing in the wrong direction is not just misleading; it is potentially dangerous. Imagine that a friend warned you that an evil man had deliberately changed a sign in order to cause harm to unwary travelers. Would you not heed the warning?

<sup>2</sup> To be sure, Satan is an evil foe who is bent on misdirecting us. (Rev. 12:9) All the bad influences discussed in the preceding article originate with him and are aimed at causing us to veer off the road that leads to eternal life. (Matt. 7:13, 14) Thankfully, our benevolent God warns us not to follow Satan's misleading 'road signs.' Let us now discuss three more of Satan's negative influences. As we consider how God's Word helps us to avoid being misled, we might imagine that Jehovah is walking behind us and is pointing us in the right direction, saying: "This is the way. Walk in it, you people." (Isa. 30:21) Reflecting on Jehovah's clear warnings will strengthen our resolve to heed them.

## Do Not Follow "False Teachers"

<sup>3</sup> Picture yourself on a journey in an arid land. You spot a well in the distance and head for it, hoping to get some water to quench your thirst. Upon arriving, however, you see that the well is dry. How disappoint-

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1, 2. What is Satan bent on doing, and how does God's Word help us?

3, 4. (a) How are false teachers like dried-up wells? (b) From where do false teachers often come, and what do they want?

ed you are! False teachers are like dried-up wells. Anyone coming to them for waters of truth will be bitterly disappointed. Jehovah through the apostles Paul and Peter warns us about false teachers. (*Read Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Peter 2:1-3.*) Who are such teachers? The inspired words of these two apostles help us to identify where false teachers come from and how they operate.

<sup>4</sup> To elders of the Ephesus congregation, Paul said: "From among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things." Addressing fellow Christians, Peter wrote: "There will also be false teachers among you." So from where do false teachers come? They may arise from within the congregation. Such ones are apostates.\* What do they want? They are not content just to leave the organization that they perhaps once loved. Their aim, Paul explained, is "to draw away the disciples after themselves." Note the definite article in the expression "*the* disciples." Rather than going out and making their own disciples, apostates seek to take Christ's disciples with them. Like "ravenous wolves," false teachers are out to devour trusting members of the congregation, destroying their faith and leading them away from the truth.—Matt. 7:15; 2 Tim. 2:18.

<sup>5</sup> How do false teachers operate? Their methods reveal a cunning spirit. Apostates "quietly bring in" corruptive ideas. Like

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\* "Apostasy" is a standing away from true worship, a falling away, defection, rebellion, abandonment.

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5. What methods do false teachers use?



*How may some invite apostates into their homes?*

Well, apostates are “mentally diseased,” and they seek to infect others with their disloyal teachings. (1 Tim. 6:3, 4) Jehovah, the Great Physician, tells us to avoid contact with them. We know what he means, but are we determined to heed his warning in all respects?

<sup>7</sup> What is involved in avoiding false teachers? We do not receive them into our homes or greet them. We also refuse to read their literature, watch TV programs that feature them, examine their Web sites, or add our comments to their blogs. Why do we take such a firm stand? Because of love. We love “the God of truth,” so we are not interested in twisted teachings that contradict his Word of truth. (Ps. 31:5; John 17:17) We also love Jehovah’s organization, through which we have been taught thrilling truths—including Jehovah’s name and its meaning, God’s purpose for the earth, the condition of the dead, and the hope of the resurrection. Can you recall how you felt when you first learned these and other precious truths? Why, then, allow yourself to be soured by anyone who would denigrate the organization through which you learned these truths?—John 6:66-69.

<sup>8</sup> No matter what false teachers may say, we will not follow them! Why go to such dried-up wells only to be deceived and disappointed? Instead, let us be determined to remain loyal to Jehovah and to the organization that has a long record of quenching our thirst with the pure and refreshing waters of

smugglers, they operate in a clandestine manner, subtly introducing apostate views. And just as a clever forger tries to pass phony documents, so apostates use “counterfeit words,” or false arguments, trying to pass their fabricated views as if they were true. They spread “deceptive teachings,” “twisting . . . the Scriptures” to fit their own ideas. (2 Pet. 2:1, 3, 13; 3:16) Clearly, apostates do not have our best interests at heart. Following them would only divert us from the road that leads to eternal life.

<sup>6</sup> How can we protect ourselves against false teachers? The Bible’s counsel regarding how to deal with them is clear. (*Read Romans 16:17; 2 John 9-11.*) “Avoid them,” says God’s Word. Other translations render that phrase “turn away from them,” “keep away from them,” and “stay away from them!” There is nothing ambiguous about that inspired counsel. Suppose that a doctor told you to avoid contact with someone who is infected with a contagious, deadly disease. You would know what the doctor means, and you would strictly heed his warning.

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6. The Bible gives us what clear counsel regarding false teachers?

7, 8. (a) What is involved in avoiding false teachers? (b) Why are you determined to take a firm stand against false teachers?

truth from God's inspired Word.—Isa. 55: 1-3; Matt. 24:45-47.

### Do Not Follow "False Stories"

<sup>9</sup> At times, it may be easy to discern that a road sign has been tampered with and is pointing the wrong way. At other times, it may be difficult to detect the deception. It is similar with Satan's negative influences; some are more obvious than others. The apostle Paul warns us about one of Satan's insidious strategies—"false stories." (*Read 1 Timothy 1:3, 4.*) Lest we become sidetracked from the road leading to life, we need to know, What are false stories, and how can we avoid paying attention to them?

<sup>10</sup> Paul's warning about false stories is part of his first letter to Timothy, a Christian overseer who was charged with preserving the purity of the congregation and helping fellow believers to remain faithful. (1 Tim. 1: 18, 19) Paul uses a Greek word that can refer to fiction, myth, or falsehood. According to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, this word refers to "a (religious) story that has no connection with reality." Perhaps Paul had in mind religious lies promoted by sensational tales or fanciful legends.\* Such stories only "furnish questions for research"—that is, raise frivolous questions that lead to pointless research. False stories are a ploy of the archdeceiver, Satan, who uses religious lies and godless myths to sidetrack unsuspecting ones. Paul's counsel is clear: Do not pay attention to false stories!

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\* For example, the apocryphal book of Tobit (Tobias), written about the third century B.C.E. and thus extant in Paul's day, is full of superstition and absurd tales of magic and sorcery presented as truth.—See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, page 122.

9, 10. What warning did Paul give Timothy regarding "false stories," and what may Paul have had in mind? (See also footnote.)

<sup>11</sup> What are some false stories that could lead astray the unwary? In principle, the expression "false stories" can apply to any religious lie or myth that could turn us "away from the truth." (2 Tim. 4:3, 4) Satan, who pretends to be "an angel of light," has made clever use of false religion in misleading people. (2 Cor. 11:14) Under the guise of Christianity, Christendom teaches doctrines—including the Trinity, hellfire, and immortality of the soul—that are awash in myths and falsehoods. Christendom also promotes holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, whose seemingly innocent customs are actually rooted in mythology and paganism. By heeding God's warning to separate ourselves and "quit touching the unclean thing," we will not be misled by false stories.  
—2 Cor. 6:14-17.

<sup>12</sup> Satan has promoted other lies that could mislead us if we are not careful. Consider some examples. *Anything goes—right or wrong. It is determined by how you feel.* This idea is promoted in the media and in entertainment. Such a distorted view of God's standards exerts pressure on us to cast aside all moral restraint. The truth is that we have a desperate need for moral guidance that only God can fill. (Jer. 10:23) *God will not intervene in earth's affairs.* Being influenced by such a live-for-today spirit could cause us to become "inactive or unfruitful." (2 Pet. 1:8) The truth is that Jehovah's day is fast approaching, and we must keep in expectation of it. (Matt. 24:44) *God does not care about you as an individual.* Believing this satanic lie could cause us to give up, feeling that

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11. How has Satan made clever use of false religion in misleading people, and heeding what warning will help us to avoid being misled?

12, 13. (a) What lies has Satan promoted, and what is the truth regarding each of those lies? (b) How can we avoid being misled by Satan's false stories?

we could never be worthy of God's love. The truth is that Jehovah loves and values his worshippers as individuals.—Matt. 10:29-31.

<sup>13</sup> We must keep up our guard, for the thinking and attitudes of Satan's world may seem plausible on the surface. Remember, though, that Satan is a master of deception. Only by heeding the counsel and reminders of God's Word can we avoid being misled by Satan's "artfully contrived false stories [“cleverly concocted myths,” *The New American Bible*].”—2 Pet. 1:16.

### Do Not “Follow Satan”

<sup>14</sup> Imagine a road sign that says “This Way to Follow Satan.” Who of us would heed such a sign? Yet, Paul warns us about several ways in which dedicated Christians might be “turned aside to follow Satan.” (**Read 1 Timothy 5:11-15.**) Paul's words are directed to certain “younger widows,” but the principles he mentions apply to all of us. Those first-century Christian women may not have thought that they were following Satan, but their actions amounted to just that. How can we guard against even unwittingly following Satan? Let us examine Paul's warning regarding harmful gossip.

<sup>15</sup> Satan's aim is to silence the voice of our faith—to get us to stop preaching the good news. (Rev. 12:17) To that end, he tries to get us to pursue activities that waste time or that cause division among us. Notice how Paul identifies Satan's tactics. *“Unoccupied, gadding about.”* In this age of technology, it is easy to waste our time and that of others by, for example, forwarding nonessential or even fallacious e-mails. *“Gossipers.”* Harm-

14. What warning did Paul give to certain younger widows, and why do all of us need to take to heart his words?

15. What is Satan's aim, and how does Paul identify Satan's tactics?

### What Is Your Answer?

How can you make personal application of the warnings contained in the following scriptures?

- 2 Peter 2:1-3
- 1 Timothy 1:3, 4
- 1 Timothy 5:11-15

ful gossip may lead to slander, which often causes contention. (Prov. 26:20) Whether they realize it or not, malicious slanderers imitate Satan the Devil.\* *“Meddlers in other people's affairs.”* It is not our right to tell others how to run their personal affairs. All such idle and troublesome behavior can distract us from the God-assigned work of Kingdom preaching. If we stop actively supporting Jehovah's work, then we start following Satan. There is no middle ground.  
—Matt. 12:30.

<sup>16</sup> Heeding the Bible's advice can help us to avoid being “turned aside to follow Satan.” Consider some of Paul's wise counsel. *Have “plenty to do in the work of the Lord.”* (1 Cor. 15:58) Keeping busy in Kingdom activities will protect us from the dangers of idleness and time-wasting pursuits. (Matt. 6: 33) *Speak what is “good for building up.”* (Eph. 4:29) Be determined not to listen to harmful gossip and not to spread it.\* Cultivate trust in and respect for fellow believers. We will thus be inclined to speak words that build up rather than tear down. *“Make it your aim . . . to mind your own business.”* (1 Thess. 4:11) Show personal interest in

\* The Greek word for “devil” is *di·a'bo·los*, which means “slanderer.” This word is used as another title of Satan, the foremost slanderer.—John 8:44; Rev. 12:9, 10.

# See the box “Scattering Feathers in the Wind.”

16. Heeding what advice can help us to avoid being “turned aside to follow Satan”?

others, but do so in ways that respect their privacy and that do not take away their dignity. Remember, too, that we should not impose our own views on others regarding matters that they need to decide for themselves.—Gal. 6:5.

<sup>17</sup> How grateful we are that Jehovah clearly tells us what *not* to follow! Never forget,

17. (a) Why does Jehovah warn us about what not to follow? (b) What is your determination regarding the path that Jehovah wants us to take?

though, that Jehovah's warnings discussed in this and the preceding article are motivated by his great love for us. He wants to spare us the misery and pain that result from following Satan's misleading 'road signs.' The path that Jehovah wants us to take may be cramped, but it leads to the best possible destination—everlasting life. (Matt. 7:14) May we never waver in our determination to heed Jehovah's admonition: "This is the way. Walk in it."—Isa. 30:21.



## Scattering Feathers in the Wind

An old Jewish tale well illustrates the consequences of spreading hurtful gossip. Told in various forms, the gist of the story is as follows.

A man went about town slandering the town's wise man. Later, the malicious gossiper realized his wrong and went to the wise man to ask for forgiveness, offering to do whatever was necessary to make amends. The wise man had one request: The gossiper was told to go and take a feather pillow and cut it open, scattering the feathers to the wind. Though puzzled by the request, the gossiper did as he was instructed and then returned to the wise man.

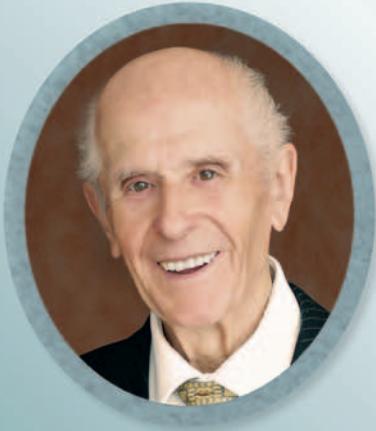
"Am I now forgiven?" he asked.

"First, go and gather all the feathers," the wise man responded.

"But how can I? The wind has already scattered them."

"It is as difficult to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover the feathers."

The lesson is clear. Once spoken, words cannot be retrieved, and it may be impossible to undo the hurt they cause. Before spreading a bit of gossip, we are wise to remember that we are, in effect, about to scatter feathers in the wind.



# I FEARED DEATH —NOW I AWAITS 'LIFE IN ABUNDANCE'

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AS TOLD BY  
**PIERO GATTI**

A LOW rumbling noise gradually became louder and louder. It was followed by the wail of sirens warning people to take cover. Then came the howl of bombs and destruction and a roar that burst the eardrums of the terror-struck.

That was Milan, Italy, in 1943/1944. As a young soldier stationed there, I was often ordered to collect human remains buried in bombed-out air-raid shelters where people had been trapped, their bodies torn to pieces and unrecognizable. And it was not only the death of others that I saw up close. Sometimes I myself narrowly escaped death. On those occasions I prayed, promising God that if I survived the massacres, I would do his will.

## **Dispelling My Fear of Death**

I grew up in a village about six miles (10 km) from Como, Italy, near the Swiss border. At an early age, I came face-to-face with grief and the fear of death. The Spanish flu took two of my sisters. Then in 1930, when I was only six years old, my mother, Luigia, died. Growing up as a Catholic, I observed religious rules and attended weekly Mass. But it was years later in a barbershop, not in a church, that my fear was dispelled.

In 1944, World War II was reaping a deadly harvest. I was one of tens of thousands of Italian soldiers who had fled the war zone to neutral Switzerland. Upon arrival we were taken to a number of refugee camps. I was sent to one near Steinach, in the northeast of the country. There we were granted a certain amount of freedom. The barber in Steinach needed temporary help in his shop. I lived and worked with him for just a month, but that was enough for me to make an acquaintance that changed my life.

One of the barber's customers was Adolfo Tellini, an Italian living in Switzerland. He was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I had never heard of this group, which was hardly surprising considering that at the time there were no more than 150 Witnesses in all of Italy. Adolfo told me about wonderful Bible truths, promises of peace and of 'life in abundance.' (John 10:10; Rev. 21:3, 4) I was enthralled by the message of a future without war and death. Back at the refugee camp, I shared this hope with another young Italian, Giuseppe Tubini, and he too was impressed. Adolfo and other Witnesses would visit us in the camp every now and again.

Adolfo took me to Arbon, about six miles (10 km) from Steinach, where a small group of Witnesses held meetings in Italian. I was

so enthusiastic about what I heard that the next week I walked there. Later, I attended an assembly of the Witnesses at a convention hall in Zurich. I was particularly struck by a slide presentation of extermination camps, showing piles of bodies. I learned that many German Witnesses had been martyred for their faith. At that assembly, I met Maria Pizzato. Because of her activities as a Witness, she had been given an 11-year sentence by the Italian Fascist authorities.

When the war was over, I returned to Italy and joined the small congregation in Como. I had not had a systematic Bible study, but I had the fundamental truths clearly in mind. Maria Pizzato also belonged to that congregation. She spoke to me about the need for Christian baptism and invited me to visit Marcello Martinelli, who lived in Castione Andevenno, in the province of Sondrio. Marcello was a faithful anointed brother who had been sentenced to 11 years by the dictatorial regime. I had to cycle 50 miles (80 km) to visit him.

Marcello used the Bible to explain the requirements for baptism, after which we prayed and went to the river Adda, where I was baptized. It was September 1946. That was such a special day! I was so excited about my decision to serve Jehovah and now to have a solid hope for the future that when evening came, I hardly realized I had pedaled 100 miles (160 km) that day!

In May 1947, the first postwar assembly in Italy was held in Milan. About 700 attended, including many of those who had lived through the Fascist persecution. Something rather unusual took place at this assembly. Giuseppe Tubini, to whom I had witnessed in the refugee camp, gave the baptism talk—after which he himself got baptized!

At that assembly, I had the privilege of meeting Brother Nathan Knorr, from Brook-

lyn Bethel. He encouraged Giuseppe and me to use our lives in service to God. I decided that I would begin full-time service within a month. On arriving home, I told my family of my decision, and they all tried to dissuade me. Yet, I was determined. So a month later, I started my service at Bethel in Milan. Four missionaries served there: Giuseppe (Joseph) Romano and his wife, Angelina; Carlo Benanti and his wife, Costanza. The fifth member of the family was Giuseppe Tubini, who had just joined them, and I was the sixth.

After one month at Bethel, I was appointed a circuit overseer—the first Italian-born in the country. Brother George Fredianelli, the first missionary to come to Italy from the United States in 1946, was already in the traveling work. He trained me for a few weeks, and then I set off for this adventure on my own. I particularly remember the first congregation I visited—Faenza. Just think! Up until then I had never even given a talk to a congregation! Even so, I encouraged those in attendance, including many young ones, to think about taking up the full-time ministry. Later, some of those young ones received assignments of great responsibility in the Italian field.

I had begun an exciting life as a traveling overseer. It was a life of surprises, adjustments, challenges, and joys, and one in which I received great affection from dear brothers and sisters.

### The Religious Scene in Postwar Italy

Let me tell you something about the religious situation in Italy back then. The Catholic Church reigned unchallenged. Although a new constitution became operative in 1948, it was not until 1956 that the Fascist laws preventing Witnesses from preaching freely were repealed. As a result of

▼ *On our way to Gilead*



pressure from the clergy, circuit assemblies were often interrupted. But sometimes the clergy's efforts failed miserably, which is what happened in 1948 at Sulmona, a small town in central Italy.

The assembly was being held in a theater. On Sunday morning, I was the chairman, and Giuseppe Romano gave the public talk. The audience was immense for those days. At a time when there were not even 500 publishers in the whole country, 2,000 people packed the theater. At the end of the discourse, a young man, coached by two priests who were in the audience, jumped onto the stage. Intent on creating confusion, he started yelling at the top of his voice. I immediately told him, "If you have something to say, rent a hall, and you can say whatever you like." The audience was not impressed with him and drowned out his voice with expressions of disapproval. At this, the young man jumped off the stage and disappeared.

In those days, traveling was quite an adventure. I sometimes walked from one congregation to the next, rode my bicycle, traveled on battered, overcrowded buses, or took the train. On occasion, my accommodations were a stable or a toolshed. The war had only recently ended, and most Italians

were poor. There were few brothers, and they were of little means. Life in Jehovah's service was wonderful just the same.

#### **Training at Gilead**

In 1950, Giuseppe Tubini and I were invited to attend the 16th class of the missionary school of Gilead. Right from the start, I realized that it would be difficult for me to learn English. I tried my very best, but it was a real challenge. We had to read the whole Bible in English. To accomplish this, I sometimes skipped lunch to practice reading out loud. Eventually, my turn came to give a talk. I remember the instructor's comment as if it were yesterday, "Your gestures and your enthusiasm are excellent, but your English is totally incomprehensible!" Despite this, I managed to complete the course successfully. Thereafter, Giuseppe and I were reassigned to Italy. With the extra training, we were both better equipped to serve the brothers.

In 1955, I married Lidia, whose baptism talk I had given seven years earlier. Her father, Domenico, was a dear brother who had



*On our wedding day ▲*

*My dear wife has been  
by my side for over 55 years*

managed to help all seven of his children to embrace the truth, despite his being persecuted by the Fascist regime and being sentenced to exile for three years. Lidia too was a real fighter for the truth. She faced three court cases before our legal right to preach from house to house was eventually recognized. When we had been married for six years, Beniamino, our first son, was born. In 1972 we had another son, Marco. I am delighted that both of them as well as their families are serving Jehovah zealously.

#### **Staying Active in Jehovah's Service**

During my happy life serving others, I have had many memorable experiences. For example, in the early 1980's, my father-in-law wrote to the then president of Italy, Sandro Pertini. During the Fascist dictatorship, both of them had been exiled to the island of Ventotene, where perceived enemies of the regime were held. My father-in-law requested an interview with the intention of giving the president a witness. When his request was granted, I accompanied him, and we were cordially received—something we were not at all used to. The president warmly greeted my father-in-law with a hug. Then we talked about our faith and gave him some literature.



In 1991, after 44 years as a traveling overseer, I left the circuit work, having visited congregations throughout Italy. For the next four years, I served as an Assembly Hall overseer until I had to lighten my activity because of a serious illness. However, thanks to Jehovah's undeserved kindness, I am still in full-time service. I try to do my best to preach and teach the good news, and I am presently conducting some Bible studies. The brothers still say that when I give talks, I have an "explosive" enthusiasm. I thank Jehovah that my vigor has not diminished with age.

As a youth, I was completely dominated by the fear of death, but gaining accurate Bible knowledge has given me a sure hope of everlasting life—life "in abundance," as Jesus called it. (John 10:10) That is what I am now looking forward to—a full life in peace, security, and happiness, with copious blessings from Jehovah. May all honor go to our loving Creator, whose name we have the privilege of bearing.—Ps. 83:18.

# GOD'S REST—WHAT IS IT?

*"There remains a sabbath resting for the people of God."*—HEB. 4:9.

FROM the first chapter of Genesis, we learn that God prepared the earth for human habitation during six figurative days. The end of each of these periods is marked by the words: "There came to be evening and there came to be morning." (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) However, with respect to the seventh day, the Bible states: "God proceeded to bless the seventh day and make it sacred, because on it he *has been resting* from all his work that God has created."—Gen. 2:3.

<sup>2</sup> Notice the form of the verb "*has been resting*." That suggests that the seventh day—God's "day" of rest—was under way in 1513 B.C.E. when Moses wrote the book of Genesis. Is God's rest day still ongoing? If so, can we enter into it today? The answers to these questions are of vital importance to us.

## Is Jehovah Still "Resting"?

<sup>3</sup> Two lines of evidence lead us to the conclusion that the seventh day was still under way in the first century C.E. First, consider Jesus' words to opposers who criticized him for healing on the Sabbath, which they construed as a form of work. The Lord said to them: "My Father *has kept working until now*, and I keep working." (John 5:16, 17) What was the point? Jesus was being accused of working on the Sabbath. His reply: "My Father has kept working" answered that charge. In effect, Jesus was saying to his crit-

1. 2. What can we conclude from an accurate rendering of Genesis 2:3, and what questions arise?
3. How do Jesus' words recorded at John 5:16, 17 indicate that the seventh day was continuing in the first century?

ics: 'My Father and I are engaged in the same type of work. Since my Father has kept working during his millenniums-long Sabbath, it is quite permissible for me to keep working, even on the Sabbath.' Thus, Jesus implied that as regards the earth, God's great Sabbath day of rest, the seventh day, had not ended in his day.\*

<sup>4</sup> A second line of evidence is provided by the apostle Paul. When quoting Genesis 2:2 concerning God's rest, Paul wrote under inspiration: "We who have exercised faith *do enter into the rest.*" (Heb. 4:3, 4, 6, 9) So the seventh day was ongoing in Paul's day. How much longer was that day of rest to continue?

<sup>5</sup> In order to answer that question, we must remember the purpose of the seventh day. Genesis 2:3 explains what it is: "God proceeded to bless the seventh day and *make it sacred.*" That day was 'made sacred'—sanctified, or set apart, by Jehovah—in order to bring his purpose to completion. That purpose is for the earth to be inhabited by *obedient* men and women who will take care of it and all life upon it. (Gen. 1:28) It is toward the realization of that purpose that both Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, the "Lord of the sabbath," have "kept working until

\* The priests and Levites performed work on the Sabbath in connection with the temple and 'remained guiltless.' As the high priest of God's great spiritual temple, Jesus could also carry out his spiritual assignment without fear of violating the Sabbath.—Matt. 12:5, 6.

4. What further evidence does Paul furnish that the seventh day was ongoing in his day?
5. What was the purpose of the seventh day, and when will that purpose be fully realized?

now." (Matt. 12:8) God's rest day will continue until his purpose in connection with it has been fully realized at the end of Christ's Thousand Year Reign.

### **Do Not "Fall in the Same Pattern of Disobedience"**

<sup>6</sup> God's purpose was clearly explained to Adam and Eve, but they failed to cooperate with it. Of course, Adam and Eve were only the first humans to pursue a course of disobedience. There have been millions of others since then. Even God's chosen people, the nation of Israel, fell into a pattern of disobedience. And significantly, Paul warned first-century Christians that even some of them could fall into the same trap as the ancient Israelites. He wrote: "Let us therefore do our utmost to enter into that rest, for fear anyone should fall in the same pattern of disobedience." (Heb. 4:11) Notice that Paul links disobedience with failure to enter into God's rest. What does that mean for us? If we were to rebel against God's purpose in some way, might we run the risk of not entering into God's rest? Clearly, the answer to that question is of great importance to us, and we will consider it further. At this point, however, let us see what more we can learn about entering into God's rest by considering the bad example of the Israelites.

### **"They Shall Not Enter Into My Rest"**

<sup>7</sup> In 1513 B.C.E., Jehovah revealed his purpose concerning the Israelites to his servant Moses. God said: "I am proceeding to go down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land [Egypt] to a land good and spacious, to

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6. What examples serve as a warning to us, and what lesson can we learn from them?

7. What did Jehovah have in mind when he delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, and what was expected of them?

a land flowing with milk and honey." (Ex. 3:8) Just as Jehovah had promised their forefather, Abraham, God's purpose in delivering the Israelites "out of the hand of the Egyptians" was to raise them up as his people. (Gen. 22:17) God gave the Israelites a code of laws that would enable them to enjoy a peaceful relationship with him. (Isa. 48:17, 18) He told the Israelites: "If you will strictly *obey* my voice and will indeed *keep* my covenant [as outlined in the Law code], then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me." (Ex. 19:5, 6) Thus, the Israelites' enjoying a privileged relationship with God was contingent on their obeying his voice.

<sup>8</sup> Just think what life would have been like if the Israelites had only obeyed God's voice! Jehovah would have blessed their fields, their vineyards, their flocks, and their herds. Their enemies would have had no permanent hold on them. (**Read 1 Kings 10:23-27.**) When the Messiah appeared, he would likely have found Israel functioning well as an independent nation, not cringing under the Roman whip. Israel would have been a model kingdom for its neighbors, providing concrete proof that obedience to the true God brings spiritual and material blessings.

<sup>9</sup> What a privilege Israel had—to work along with Jehovah's purpose, resulting in blessings not only for themselves but, eventually, for all families of the earth! (Gen. 22:18) However, as a whole, that rebellious generation showed little interest in setting up a model kingdom under theocratic

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8. What lifestyle could the Israelites have enjoyed if they had been obedient to God?

9, 10. (a) Why was Israel's desire to return to Egypt a serious matter? (b) How might a return to Egypt have affected the Israelites' worship?



***What continues to be necessary for God's people to enter into his rest?***

rule. Why, they even demanded to return to Egypt! (***Read Numbers 14:2-4.***) Now, how would their returning to Egypt advance God's purpose to make Israel into a model kingdom? It would not do so. In fact, if the Israelites returned to the custody of their pagan captors, they would never be able to follow the Mosaic Law and benefit from Jehovah's arrangement for forgiveness of their sins. How fleshly—how shortsighted—they were! No wonder Jehovah said of those rebels: "I became disgusted with this generation and said, 'They always go astray in their hearts, and they themselves have not come to know my ways.' So I swore in my anger, 'They shall not enter into my rest.'"—Heb. 3:10, 11; Ps. 95:10, 11.

<sup>10</sup> By seeking to return to Egypt, that wayward nation showed that it esteemed as of little value the spiritual blessings it had received, preferring instead the leeks, onions, and garlic that were available in Egypt. (Num. 11:5) Like ungrateful Esau, the rebels were ready to forfeit a precious spiritual heritage in exchange for a tasty meal.—Gen. 25:30-32; Heb. 12:16.

<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding the faithlessness of the generation of Israelites that left Egypt, Jehovah "kept working" patiently toward the fulfillment of his purpose, now focusing

11. How did the unfaithfulness of the Israelites in Moses' day affect God's purpose?

his attention on the next generation. The members of that new generation were more obedient than their fathers had been. In harmony with Jehovah's command, they entered the Promised Land and began to conquer it. At Joshua 24:31, we read: "Israel continued to serve Jehovah all the days of Joshua and all the days of the older men who extended their days after Joshua and who had known all the work of Jehovah that he did for Israel."

<sup>12</sup> However, that obedient generation gradually died out and was replaced by a generation that "did not know Jehovah or the work that he had done for Israel." Consequently, "the sons of Israel fell to doing what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah and serving the Baals." (Judg. 2:10, 11) The Promised Land did not prove to be a real "place of rest" for them. Because of their disobedience, they did not enjoy lasting peace with God. In speaking of a later time, Paul wrote: "If Joshua had led [the Israelites] into a place of rest, God would not afterward have spoken of another day. So there remains a sabbath resting for the people of God." (Heb. 4:8, 9) "The people of God" Paul was referring to were Christians. Does that mean that Christians could enter into God's rest? Most assuredly—both Jewish and non-Jewish Christians!

12. How do we know that it is possible to enter into God's rest today?



We can enter into Jehovah's rest today by obediently working in harmony with his advancing purpose as it is revealed to us through his organization

### Some Fail to Enter Into God's Rest

<sup>13</sup> When Paul wrote to Hebrew Christians, he was concerned that some among them were not cooperating with God's advancing purpose. (*Read Hebrews 4:1.*) In what sense? Ironically, it had to do with the observance of the Mosaic Law. For some 1,500 years, any Israelite who wished to live in harmony with God's purpose had to observe the Law. However, with Jesus' death, the Law was taken out of the way. Certain Christians failed to recognize that, and they insisted on continuing to observe certain aspects of the Law.\*

<sup>14</sup> To Christians who were bent on observing the Law, Paul explained that the high priesthood of Jesus, the new covenant, and the spiritual temple were all superior to their pre-Christian counterparts. (Heb. 7:26-28; 8:7-10; 9:11, 12) Thus, likely with the observance of the weekly Sabbath under the Law in mind, Paul wrote of the privilege of entering into Jehovah's rest day: "There remains a sabbath resting for the people of God. For the man that has entered into God's rest has

\* Whether any Jewish Christian would have gone so far as to support arrangements for the Day of Atonement after Pentecost 33 C.E. is not known. To do so would certainly show a lack of respect for Jesus' sacrifice. However, some Jewish Christians were clinging to other traditions associated with the Law.—Gal. 4:9-11.

13, 14. What connection was there between observing the Mosaic Law and entering into God's rest (a) in Moses' day? (b) in the first century?

also himself rested from his own works, just as God did from his own." (Heb. 4:8-10) Those Hebrew Christians had to stop thinking that they could earn Jehovah's approval by performing works based on the Mosaic Law. Since Pentecost 33 C.E., God's favor has graciously been bestowed on those who exercise faith in Jesus Christ.

<sup>15</sup> What had prevented the Israelites in Moses' day from entering the Promised Land? Disobedience. What was preventing some Christians in Paul's day from entering into God's rest? The same—disobedience. They failed to recognize that the Law had served its purpose and that Jehovah was leading his people in a different direction.

15. Why is obedience essential if we are to enter into God's rest?

### Questions for Meditation

- What was the purpose of God's seventh day of rest?
- How do we know that the seventh day is still under way today?
- What prevented the Israelites in Moses' day as well as some first-century Christians from entering into God's rest?
- What does it mean to enter into God's rest today?

## Entering Into God's Rest Today

<sup>16</sup> Few Christians today would insist on observing some aspect of the Mosaic Law in order to obtain salvation. Paul's inspired words to the Ephesians are perfectly clear: "By this undeserved kindness, indeed, you have been saved through faith; and this not owing to you, it is God's gift. No, it is not owing to works, in order that no man should have ground for boasting." (Eph. 2:8, 9) What, then, does it mean for Christians to enter into God's rest? Jehovah set aside the seventh day—his rest day—in order to bring his purpose respecting the earth to a glorious

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16, 17. (a) What does it mean to enter into God's rest today? (b) What will be discussed in the next article?

fulfillment. *We can enter into Jehovah's rest—or join him in his rest—by obediently working in harmony with his advancing purpose as it is revealed to us through his organization.*

<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, if we minimized the Bible-based counsel that we receive through the faithful and discreet slave class, choosing to follow an independent course, we would be placing ourselves at odds with God's unfolding purpose. This could endanger our peaceful relationship with Jehovah. In the next article, we will consider a few common situations that can affect God's people and discuss how the decisions we make, whether to obey or to take an independent course, can determine if we have truly entered into God's rest.

# GOD'S REST —HAVE YOU ENTERED INTO IT?

*"The word of God is alive and exerts power."*—HEB. 4:12.

IN THE preceding article, we saw that we can enter into God's rest by obediently working along with his purposes. That might be easier said than done. When we learn that Jehovah disapproves of something that we enjoy, for example, our initial reaction might be to rebel. That indicates that we need to make progress in the realm of being "ready to obey." (Jas. 3:17) In this article, we will review a few areas in which our willingness to fit in with God's purpose

—to be obedient from the heart—could be put to the test.

<sup>2</sup> How well do you do in the matter of accepting Bible-based counsel? The Scriptures tell us that it is God's will to gather to himself "the desirable things of all the nations." (Hag. 2:7) Of course, most of us were far from desirable when we first learned the truth. However, love for God and for his dear Son impelled us to make significant changes in our attitude and habits so as to

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1. What is one way we can enter into God's rest today, but why might that be easier said than done?

2, 3. What efforts must we continue to make in order to remain desirable from Jehovah's standpoint?

be fully pleasing to God. Finally, after much prayer and effort on our part, the blessed day arrived when we were able to present ourselves for Christian baptism.—***Read Colossians 1:9, 10.***

<sup>3</sup> The battle against imperfection did not end with our baptism, however. The fight continued and will continue as long as we are imperfect. We are assured, though, that if we keep up the struggle and are determined to become ever more desirable in God's eyes, Jehovah will bless our efforts.

### When Counsel Is Needed

<sup>4</sup> Before we can begin to address our imperfections, we have to know what they are. A heart-searching discourse at the Kingdom Hall or a thought-provoking article in one of our publications may expose a serious flaw. On the other hand, if we miss the point when it is presented in a talk or fail to make personal application of the written counsel, Jehovah may use a fellow Christian to draw our shortcoming to our attention.—***Read Galatians 6:1.***

<sup>5</sup> It is not easy to accept counsel from an imperfect human, no matter how tactfully and lovingly the counsel is presented. Yet, as Galatians 6:1 points out, Jehovah *commands* those with spiritual qualifications to “try” to adjust us, doing so “in a spirit of mildness.” If we respond favorably, we will become even more desirable in God’s sight. Curiously, when we pray, we freely admit that we are imperfect. However, when someone draws a specific failing to our attention, the tendency is to try to justify ourselves,

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4. In what three ways might we receive Scriptural counsel?

5. Name some undesirable ways in which we might react when we are given counsel, and explain why Christian shepherds must persist in their efforts to help us.

minimize the problem, question the motive of the counselor, or object to the way in which the counsel was delivered. (2 Ki. 5:11) And if the counsel touches a particularly sensitive area—the actions of a family member, our dress and grooming, our personal hygiene, or a form of recreation that we enjoy but that Jehovah hates—we might react quite negatively, to our own surprise and to our counselor’s dismay! But after we calm down, we usually concede that the counsel was appropriate.

<sup>6</sup> The caption text for this article reminds us that the word of God “exerts power.” Yes, God’s word exerts power to change lives. It is just as effective in helping us make needed changes after our baptism as it was prior to our taking that step. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul also writes that the word of God “pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12) In other words, when we clearly understand God’s purpose for us, the way we respond to it reveals what we are deep inside. Is there sometimes a difference between what we appear to be (the “soul”) and who we really are (the “spirit”)? (***Read Matthew 23:27, 28.***) Consider how you would react in the following situations.

### Keep Pace With Jehovah’s Organization

<sup>7</sup> Many of us can quote Proverbs 4:18 from memory: “The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly

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6. How does God’s word reveal the “thoughts and intentions of the heart”?

7, 8. (a) What might have motivated some Jewish Christians to cling to certain practices of the Mosaic Law? (b) How did their efforts square with Jehovah’s advancing purpose?

established." That means that our conduct and our understanding of God's purposes will improve over time.

<sup>8</sup> As we discussed in the preceding article, after Jesus' death it was difficult for many Jewish Christians to break free from the Mosaic Law. (Acts 21:20) Although Paul skillfully argued that Christians were no longer under the Law, some rejected his inspired reasoning. (Col. 2:13-15) Perhaps they felt that if they continued to observe at least portions of the Law, they would avoid persecution. In any case, Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians and plainly told them that they could not enter into God's rest as long as they refused to work in harmony with His unfolding purpose.\* (Heb. 4:1, 2, 6; **read Hebrews 4:11.**) To gain Jehovah's approval, they would have to face the fact that he was leading his people in a different direction.

<sup>9</sup> In modern times, there have been refinements in our understanding of certain Bible teachings. This should not trouble us; it should bolster our confidence in the faithful and discreet slave class. When representative members of the "slave" discern that our viewpoint on some point of truth needs to be clarified or corrected, they do not hold back from making the adjustment. The slave class is more interested in cooperating with God's unfolding purpose than in shielding itself from criticism over an adjusted understanding. How do you react when an adjustment in our understanding of the Scriptures is presented?

**—Read Luke 5:39.**

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\* Many leaders among the Jews scrupulously observed the Mosaic Law, but when the Messiah arrived, they failed to recognize him. They did not keep up with God's advancing purpose.

9. What attitude should we have when adjustments are made in our understanding of Scriptural matters?

<sup>10</sup> Let us consider another example. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, certain Bible Students who were excellent public speakers felt that they could best carry out the commission to preach by delivering well-prepared talks to appreciative audiences. They enjoyed public speaking, and some of them fairly basked in the warm adulation of their listeners. However, it later became evident that Jehovah desires his people to get busy in a variety of forms of preaching, including the house-to-house work. Some accomplished public speakers flatly refused to try anything new. Outwardly, they appeared to be spiritual men, fully devoted to the Lord. However, when faced with clear evidence of God's purpose regarding the preaching work, their real thoughts, intentions, and motives became manifest. How did Jehovah feel about them? He did not bless them. They left the organization.  
—Matt. 10:1-6; Acts 5:42; 20:20.

<sup>11</sup> That is not to say that it was easy for all who remained loyal to the organization to preach publicly. Many found the work challenging, especially at first. But they were obedient. In time, they overcame their anxiety, and Jehovah richly blessed them. How do you react when you are invited to share in some form of the preaching work that is presently out of your comfort zone? Are you willing to try something new?

### When Someone We Love Leaves Jehovah

<sup>12</sup> No doubt we all agree with the principle that we must be physically, moral-

10, 11. What lessons can be learned from the reaction of some when new methods of preaching the good news were introduced?

12, 13. (a) What is Jehovah's purpose in having unrepentant wrongdoers disfellowshipped? (b) What test do some Christian parents face, and what makes the test so difficult?

***The parents are devastated!***

ly, and spiritually clean in order to please God. (**Read Titus 2:14.**) There may be occasions, though, when our loyalty to this aspect of God's purpose is sorely tested. Suppose, for example, that the only son of an exemplary Christian couple leaves the truth. Preferring "the temporary enjoyment of sin" to a personal relationship with Jehovah and with his godly parents, the young man is disfellowshipped.—Heb. 11:25.

<sup>13</sup> The parents are devastated! On the subject of disfellowshipping, they know, of course, that the Bible says "to quit mixing in company with *anyone* called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man." (1 Cor. 5:11, 13) They also realize that the word "anyone" in this verse includes family members not living under their roof. But they love their son so much! Strong emotions might cause them to reason: 'How can we help our boy return to Jehovah if we severely limit our association with him? Would we not accomplish more by maintaining regular contact with him?'\*

<sup>14</sup> Our hearts go out to those parents. After all, their son had a choice, and he chose to pursue his unchristian lifestyle rather than to continue to enjoy close association with his parents and other fellow believers. The parents, on the other hand, had no say in the matter. No wonder they feel helpless!

<sup>15</sup> But what will those dear parents do? Will they obey Jehovah's clear direction? Or

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\* See "Keep Yourselves in God's Love," pages 207-209.

14, 15. What is the real decision that parents of disfellowshipped children must make?



will they rationalize that they can have regular association with their disfellowshipped son and call it "necessary family business"? In making their decision, they must not fail to consider how Jehovah feels about what they are doing. His purpose is to keep the organization clean and, if possible, to incite wrongdoers to come to their senses. How can Christian parents support that purpose?

<sup>16</sup> Moses' brother, Aaron, faced a difficult situation with regard to two of his sons. Think of how he must have felt when his sons Nadab and Abihu offered illegitimate fire to Jehovah and He struck them dead. Of course, that ended any association those men could have had with their parents. But there is more. Jehovah instructed Aaron and his faithful sons: "Do not let your heads go ungroomed, and you must not tear your garments [in mourning], that you may not die and that [Jehovah] may not become indignant against all the assembly." (Lev. 10: 1-6) The message is clear. Our love for

16, 17. What can we learn by meditating on Aaron's example?

Jehovah must be stronger than our love for unfaithful family members.

<sup>17</sup> Today, Jehovah does not immediately execute those who violate his laws. He lovingly gives them an opportunity to repent from their unrighteous works. How would Jehovah feel, though, if the parents of an unrepentant wrongdoer kept putting Him to the test by having unnecessary association with their disfellowshipped son or daughter?

<sup>18</sup> Many who were once disfellowshipped now freely admit that the firm stand taken by their friends and family members helped them come to their senses. In recommending the reinstatement of one young woman, the elders wrote that she had cleaned up her life “partly because of her fleshly brother’s respect for the disfellowshipping arrangement.” She said that “his faithful adherence to Scriptural guidelines helped her to want to return.”

<sup>19</sup> What conclusion should we draw? That we need to fight against the tendency of our imperfect hearts to rebel against Scriptural counsel. We must be absolutely convinced

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18, 19. What blessings can come to family members who work along with Jehovah’s instructions regarding disfellowshipped ones?

### Do Not Miss the Purpose

- What is needed in order for us to enter into God’s rest today?
- What connection is there between God’s purpose and our willingness to accept Scriptural counsel?
- In what areas might obedience to Scriptural direction become difficult, but why is it essential that we obey?
- In what two ways can Hebrews 4:12 be applied?

that God’s way of dealing with our problems is always best.

### “The Word of God Is Alive”

<sup>20</sup> When Paul wrote that “the word of God is alive,” he was not referring specifically to God’s written Word, the Bible.\* The context shows that he was referring to God’s word of promise. Paul’s point was that God does not make a promise and then forget about it. Jehovah established this through the prophet Isaiah: “My word . . . will not return to me without results, but it will . . . have certain success in that for which I have sent it.” (Isa. 55:11) Thus, there is no need for us to become impatient when things do not move ahead as quickly as we might wish. Jehovah ‘keeps working’ with a view to bringing his purpose to a successful conclusion.—John 5:17.

<sup>21</sup> Faithful older members of the “great crowd” have served Jehovah for decades. (Rev. 7:9) Many never expected to grow old in this system of things. Still, they have not given in to discouragement. (Ps. 92:14) They realize that God’s word of promise is not a dead issue—it is alive, and Jehovah is working toward its fulfillment. Since God’s purpose is dear to his heart, we bring joy to him when we keep it uppermost in our minds. During this seventh day, Jehovah has been resting, secure in the knowledge that his purpose will be fulfilled and that, as a group, his people will support it. What about you? Have *you* personally entered into God’s rest?

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\* Today, God speaks to us through his written Word, which has power to affect our lives. Thus, by extension, Paul’s words recorded at Hebrews 4:12 can properly be applied to the Bible.

20. In what two ways can Hebrews 4:12 be applied? (See footnote.)

21. How can Hebrews 4:12 be an encouragement to faithful older members of the “great crowd”?