

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



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SWITZERLAND

COVER: Witnessing, Bible in hand, in beautiful Grindelwald, with the Bernese Alps in the background

POPULATION

7,876,000

PUBLISHERS

18,646

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE (2013)

31,980

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

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Themselves Willingly
—In New York

STUDY ARTICLES

■ Give Thanks to Jehovah and Be Blessed

We can cultivate and maintain gratitude by meditating on our blessings and thanking Jehovah for them. Having a grateful heart will help us to fight unthankfulness and to cope with trials. Our yeartext for 2015 will remind us of this throughout the coming year.

■ Why We Observe the Lord's Evening Meal

This article makes clear why we should commemorate Jesus' death. It explains what the bread and wine at the Memorial represent and shows how a person knows whether he or she should partake of these emblems. This study will also help us to see how we personally can prepare for the Lord's Evening Meal.

■ Build a Strong and Happy Marriage

■ Let Jehovah Fortify and Safeguard Your Marriage

Married couples are contending with increasing pressures and temptations. Yet, with Jehovah's help, it is possible to have a strong and happy marriage. The first article will discuss five spiritual building blocks for a strong and lasting marriage and the mortar that can be used to bind them together. The second article will examine how to fortify the spiritual defenses of a marriage.

■ Is Unfailing Love Possible?

What is true love between a man and a woman like? Is enduring love possible? How is such love expressed? Learn what the Song of Solomon teaches us about unfailing love.

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

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THEY OFFERED
THEMSELVES
WILLINGLY



in New York



A FEW years ago, **Cesar** and his wife, **Rocio**, were living a comfortable life in **California**, where Cesar was working full-time in the field of heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning and Rocio worked part-time at a doctor's office. They owned their home, and they had no children. However, something happened that changed their lives. What was it?

In October 2009, the United States branch office sent a letter to all congregations in the country, inviting skilled volunteers to apply for temporary Bethel service to assist with the expansion of the branch facilities in Wallkill, New York. Even those over the usual age limit for Bethel service were invited to apply. "Because of our age, we knew that this could be a once-in-a-lifetime chance to serve at Bethel," relate Cesar and Rocio. "We were not about to pass that opportunity up for anything!" The couple immediately submitted their applications.

Warwick construction site,
June 2014

More than a year went by, but Cesar and Rocio had not been invited to Bethel. Nonetheless, they took further steps toward reaching their goal by simplifying their life. "We converted our garage into a studio apartment so that we could rent our house to someone else. Then we moved out of our 2,200-square-foot (200 sq m) dream home that we had built just a couple of years earlier and moved into our 270-square-foot (25 sq m) apartment. Making these changes," says Cesar, "put us in a better position to accept an invitation to Bethel, should one come our way." What happened next? "One month after we moved into our small apartment," relates Rocio, "we received an invitation to serve as temporary volunteers at Wallkill. It was clear to us that by simplifying our life, we had given Jehovah something to bless."

THEIR SELF-SACRIFICING SPIRIT IS BEING BLESSED

Like Cesar and Rocio, hundreds of brothers and sisters have made sacrifices in order to share in





Some of the couples who are working at Wallkill

the construction work that is taking place in New York State. A number of these are supporting the expansion at Wallkill, while many others have been privileged to help with the construction of the world headquarters in Warwick.* Many couples have given up their nice homes, good jobs, and even family pets in order to serve Jehovah more fully. Has Jehovah blessed such a self-sacrificing spirit? Indeed, he has!

For example, **Way**, an electrician, and **Debra**, both in their late 50's, sold their home and most of their belongings in **Kansas** and moved to Wallkill to serve as commuter Bethelites.[#] Although doing so required making adjustments in their life, they feel that the sacrifices have been well worth it. Regarding her assignment at Bethel, Debra says: "Sometimes I feel as if I've stepped into one of those Paradise construction scenes that are featured in our publications!"

Melvin and **Sharon** sold their home and belongings in **South Carolina** so that they could assist at Warwick. Even though these sacrifices were not easy to make, the couple feel privileged to be

involved in such a historic project. They say: "The joy that comes from knowing that you are accomplishing something that will benefit the worldwide organization is a wonderful feeling."

Kenneth, a retired builder, and **Maureen**, who are in their mid-50's, moved from **California** to serve on the Warwick project. In order to move, they made arrangements with a sister in the congregation to care for their home and asked their family to help look after Ken's aged father. Do they regret making sacrifices to serve at Bethel? No! "We are benefiting immensely," says Ken. "Is it without challenges? Of course not, but we live a very rewarding life, and we wholeheartedly recommend this service to others."

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Most of those who have made themselves available had to overcome certain obstacles. For example, **William** and **Sandra**, who are in their early 60's, were settled, enjoying their life in **Pennsylvania**. They had a successful precision machining company that employed 17 people. They were serving with the same congregation they had been in since they were little children, and most of their relatives lived in the area. So when the opportunity arose to serve as commuters at Wallkill, they knew that it would mean say-

* See the 2014 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, pages 12-13.

[#] Part-time commuter Bethelites care for their own housing and living expenses while working one or more days a week at Bethel.

ing good-bye to almost everyone and everything familiar to them. “Without a doubt, the single greatest challenge for us has been leaving our comfort zone,” says William. However, after much prayer, the couple decided to go ahead with their move—a step they do not regret. “The joy of being directly involved and serving alongside the Bethel family cannot be compared to anything else,” says William. “Sandra and I are happier than we have ever been!”

Ricky, a construction project manager in **Hawaii**, was invited to serve as a commuter Bethelite to assist with the Warwick project. His wife, **Kendra**, wanted him to accept the invitation. However, they had a legitimate concern: the welfare of their 11-year-old son, **Jacob**. They wondered if it would be wise to relocate the family to New York State and if their son would be able to adjust to a totally different environment.

“One of our priorities was that of finding a congregation with young ones who were doing well spiritually,” says Ricky. “We wanted Jacob to have plenty of good association.” As it turned out, the congregation where they ended up has very few children but several Bethelites. “After our first meeting there, I asked Jacob how he felt about

the new congregation, especially since there weren’t any young ones his age,” says Ricky. “He told me, ‘Don’t worry, Dad. My friends will be the young Bethel brothers.’”

Sure enough, the young Bethelites have befriended Jacob. With what effect? “One night, I was passing my son’s room and saw that the lights were still on,” Ricky relates. “I expected to catch him playing an electronic game, but he was reading the Bible! When I asked him what he was doing, Jacob said, ‘I’m being a young Bethelite, and I’m going to read the Bible in one year.’” Needless to say, Ricky and Kendra are thrilled, not only because Ricky can share in the construction work at Warwick but also because their move is contributing to their son’s spiritual growth. —Prov. 22:6.

NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE

The construction projects at Wallkill and Warwick will eventually be completed, so those who have been invited to assist realize that their Bethel service is temporary. Are these brothers and sisters overly anxious about where they will go or what they will do? Not at all! Many share the feelings of two middle-aged couples from **Florida**. **John**, a construction manager, and his wife, **Carmen**,



Some of the volunteers who are working at Warwick



Jacob and his parents enjoy association with Bethelites in their congregation

who serve as temporary volunteers at Warwick, say: “We have seen how Jehovah has cared for our specific needs up to this point. We reason that Jehovah certainly has not brought us here at this time only to abandon us later.” (Ps. 119:116) **Luis**, who designs fire suppression systems, and his wife, **Quenia**, serve at Wallkill. They say: “We have already seen Jehovah’s generous hand provide what we need materially. Although we don’t know how, when, or where, we are confident that he *will* continue to care for us.”—Ps. 34:10; 37:25.



- 1) Gary
- 2) Way
- 3) Kenneth
- 4) Jason, Cesar, and William
- 5) Luis and Dale
- 6) John and Melvin



“A BLESSING UNTIL THERE IS NOTHING LACKING”

Most of those who have assisted with the construction work in New York could have found reasons not to volunteer. However, they put Jehovah to the test—just as he invites all of us to do: “Test me out, please, . . . to see whether I will not open to you the floodgates of the heavens and pour out on you a blessing until there is nothing lacking.” —Mal. 3:10.

Will you too test Jehovah out and experience his rich blessing? Prayerfully examine what you can do to have a share in the exciting work at hand, whether in New York or on other theocratic building projects, and see firsthand how Jehovah will reward you.—Mark 10:29, 30.

Dale, a civil engineer, and **Cathy**, from **Alabama**, highly recommend this type of service. Volunteering at Wallkill, they say: “If you have the courage to step out of your comfort zone, you will have an opportunity to see Jehovah’s spirit at work.” And what is needed for you to make yourself available? Dale says: “Simplify, simplify, and then simplify some more. You will never regret it!” **Gary**, from **North Carolina**, has 30 years’ experience in construction management. He and his wife, **Mau-reen**, say that one of the blessings they are enjoying at Warwick is “meeting and working with the many wonderful brothers and sisters who have spent their life serving Jehovah at Bethel.” Gary adds: “To serve at Bethel, you need to lead a simple life, which is the best way to live through this system of things.” **Jason**, who worked for an electrical contractor, and **Jennifer**, from **Illinois**, say that working at Wallkill on a Bethel project is “one of the closest things you can experience to new world living.” Jennifer adds: “It is overwhelming to feel that everything you do is appreciated by Jehovah and is an investment in the future that he is preparing for us. Jehovah sees to it that you are enriched beyond measure.”



CAN YOU MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE?

For King David, his “heart’s desire” was to build a house for Jehovah’s name. (1 Chron. 22:7) David wanted nothing more than to have a share in constructing a temple that would bring praise and glory to God. If David were alive today, how would he feel about the great building work that is taking place in our time?

As the number of Kingdom proclaimers increases and as we near the end of this system of things, there is an urgent need for more facilities. (Isa. 60:22; Hab. 2:3) These include branch offices, Assembly Halls, Kingdom Halls, Remote Translation Offices, and theocratic school facilities in many countries. Constructing all these buildings calls for many willing volunteers who have the experience necessary for the successful completion of such projects. These fields and trades include real estate, architecture, drafting, engineering, cost estimating, procurement, project oversight, surveying, masonry, concrete, mechanical installations, plumbing, welding, electrical, carpentry, heavy-equipment operation and maintenance, landscaping, and the finishing trades.

Assistance is likely needed with projects in your area. Moreover, there is a great need for those who qualify to take up foreign assignments. Would you like to make yourself available? If so, now is the time to approach your congregation elders. Ask them how you can qualify for such privileges and how to apply for them.

Younger and older ones are experiencing the joys of sharing in this outstanding building work. Make it a matter of prayer. You too may develop a “heart’s desire” to help build facilities to the glory of Jehovah’s name. You can be sure that you will never regret it!

Our yeartext for 2015:
**“Give thanks to Jehovah,
for he is good.”—Psalm 106:1**



Give Thanks to Jehovah and Be Blessed

“Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good.”—PS. 106:1.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What do we learn from the apostle Paul about gratitude?

How are meditation and prayer keys to maintaining thankfulness?

How can reflecting on our blessings help us to cope with trials?

JEHOVAH, the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect present,” is indeed worthy of our thanks. (Jas. 1:17) As our loving Shepherd, he tenderly cares for all our physical and spiritual needs. (Ps. 23:1-3) He has proved to be “our refuge and strength”—especially in times of distress! (Ps. 46:1) Surely we have many reasons to agree wholeheartedly with the psalmist who wrote: “Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good; his loyal love endures forever.”—Ps. 106:1.

² Why is it important for us to consider this matter of giving thanks? As foretold, people in these last days have become increasingly unthankful. (2 Tim. 3:2) Many take their blessings for granted. Influenced by the commercial world and its advertising, millions of people strive to obtain more instead of being content with what they have. We too can be affected by this unappreciative spirit. Like the ancient Israelites, we could become ungrateful and lose appreciation for

1. Why is Jehovah worthy of our thanks?

2. 3. (a) What are the dangers of taking our blessings for granted? (b) What questions will we consider in this article?

our precious relationship with Jehovah and for the blessings that we have received from him.—Ps. 106:7, 11-13.

³ Then, too, consider what can happen when we undergo difficult trials. At such times, we could easily become overwhelmed and lose sight of our blessings. (Ps. 116:3) Therefore, how can we cultivate a grateful heart and maintain it? And what will help us to remain positive even when we are undergoing severe trials? Let us see.

“HOW MANY THINGS YOU HAVE DONE, O JEHOVAH”

⁴ If we are to cultivate a grateful heart and maintain it, we must acknowledge and meditate appreciatively on our blessings from Jehovah and carefully consider his acts of loyal love. When the psalmist did so, he was awed by the many wonderful things that Jehovah had done.—**Read Psalm 40:5; 107:43.**

⁵ We can learn much from the apostle Paul about cultivating gratitude. Evidently, he meditated on his blessings, for he frequently expressed heartfelt thanks. Paul well knew that he had been “a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man.” Hence, he gave thanks that despite his past sinful conduct, God and Christ had shown him mercy and had entrusted him with a ministry. (**Read 1 Timothy 1:12-14.**) Paul also deeply appreciated his fellow Christians and often thanked Jehovah for their fine qualities and faithful service. (Phil. 1: 3-5, 7; 1 Thess. 1:2, 3) And when Paul faced trialsome situations, he was quick to thank Jehovah for the timely support

that he received from his spiritual brothers. (Acts 28:15; 2 Cor. 7:5-7) It is not surprising, therefore, that Paul’s writings encourage Christians: “Show yourselves thankful . . . , encouraging one another with psalms, praises to God, spiritual songs sung with gratitude.”—Col. 3: 15-17.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER —KEYS TO MAINTAINING THANKFULNESS

⁶ How can we imitate Paul’s fine example in cultivating and expressing gratitude? Like Paul, we need to meditate on what Jehovah has done for us personally. (Ps. 116:12) If you were asked, ‘What blessings from Jehovah are you grateful for?’ how would you answer? Would you include your precious relationship with Jehovah? Or the forgiveness that you receive because of your faith in Christ’s ransom sacrifice? Would you relate the names of brothers and sisters who have stood by you during various difficult trials? Of course, your beloved marriage mate or your precious children would not escape your mention. Taking time to meditate on such beautiful blessings from your loving Father, Jehovah, will fill your heart with gratitude and will move you to give thanks every day.—**Read Psalm 92:1, 2.**

⁷ When we have our blessings firmly fixed in mind and heart, we are ready to pray to Jehovah and offer thanksgiving. (Ps. 95:2; 100:4, 5) Many view prayer as merely a way to ask God for things. We,

4. How can we maintain a grateful heart?

5. What can we learn from the apostle Paul about cultivating gratitude?

6. For what are you particularly grateful to Jehovah?

7. (a) Why should we offer prayers of thanksgiving? (b) How will you benefit from expressing gratitude in your prayers?



What blessings from
Jehovah are you grateful for?
(See paragraphs 6, 7)

however, know that Jehovah is pleased when we express thanks for what we have. The Bible contains numerous heartwarming prayers of thanksgiving, including those offered by Hannah and Hezekiah. (1 Sam. 2:1-10; Isa. 38:9-20) So imitate those faithful servants who showed a grateful spirit. Yes, thank Jehovah in prayer for the blessings that you have. (1 Thess. 5:17, 18) The benefits from doing so are many. Your spirits will be lifted, you will grow in love for Jehovah, and you will draw ever closer to him.—Jas. 4:8.

⁸ Why should we remain alert to the danger of losing our appreciation for Jehovah's goodness? Because we have inherited a tendency to be unthankful. Consider: Our original parents, Adam and Eve, were placed in a paradise garden. All their needs were filled, and they had the prospect of living forever in peace. (Gen. 1:28) But they did not appreciate their blessings. They greedily desired more. As a result, they lost everything. (Gen. 3:6, 7, 17-19) Sur-

rounded by an unthankful world, we too could begin to lose sight of all that Jehovah has done for us. We could begin to take our friendship with him for granted. We might lose appreciation for the privilege that we have to be part of our worldwide brotherhood. We could become absorbed in things of this world that will soon pass away. (1 John 2:15-17) To avoid that downward spiral, we want to meditate on our blessings and regularly thank Jehovah for the privilege we have of being his people.—**Read Psalm 27:4.**

WHEN COPING WITH TRIALS

⁹ Having a grateful heart can help us to cope with grievous trials. We may feel overwhelmed if we are suddenly confronted with life-altering circumstances, such as the unfaithfulness of a marriage mate, a life-threatening illness, the death of a loved one, or the devastating effects of a natural disaster. At such times, we will be comforted and strengthened by reflecting on our bless-

8. What could cause us to lose appreciation for all that Jehovah has done for us?

9. When confronted with grievous trials, why should we reflect on our blessings?

ings. Consider the following real-life experiences.

¹⁰ Irina*, a regular pioneer in North America, was married to an elder who proved unfaithful and abandoned her and their children. What helped Irina to go on serving Jehovah faithfully? She says: "I am grateful for Jehovah's personal care for me as an individual. By choosing to count my blessings each day, I can see what a privilege it is to be known and loved by our protective heavenly Father. I know that he will never abandon me." Although Irina has experienced many tragic circumstances in her life, her joyful spirit continues to sustain her and she is a source of encouragement to others.

¹¹ Kyung-sook, who lives in Asia, pioneered with her husband for more than 20 years. Suddenly, she was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer and was told that she had from three to six months to live. Although she and her husband had faced many trials, large and small, they had always felt confident about their health. She said: "This health issue hit me hard. I felt that I had lost everything, and I was very scared." What has helped Kyung-sook to cope? She says: "Every night before going to bed, I go to the rooftop of our home and pray out loud about five things that I am grateful for from that day. Then I feel reassured, and I am moved to express my love for Jehovah." How has Kyung-sook benefited from these nightly prayers? She says: "I

have come to realize that Jehovah sustains us through trialsome circumstances and that there are far more blessings in our lives than there are trials."

¹² Jason, who serves at a branch office in Africa, has been in full-time service for more than 30 years. He relates: "Seven years ago, I lost my wife in death, and the pain can be overwhelming. Letting myself dwell on what she experienced while fighting cancer can be very disheartening." What has helped Jason to cope? "At one point," he says, "I was remembering a pleasant time that my wife and I had spent together, and I thanked Jehovah in prayer for that memory. I felt a sense of relief and thereafter started to thank Jehovah regularly for such happy memories. Gratefulness has made a big difference in my outlook. I still feel the pain of the loss, but thanking Jehovah for having had a good marriage and for the privilege of serving him with someone who deeply loved him has improved my outlook."

¹³ When Super Typhoon Haiyan hit the central Philippines in late 2013, Sheryl, who was only 13 years old at the time, lost virtually everything. She said: "I lost my home, and I lost most of my family." Her father, mother, and three siblings died in the powerful storm surge. What has helped Sheryl to get through this tragedy without becoming bitter? She has a grateful heart and remains conscious of the blessings she still has. "I saw all that the brothers and sisters did to bring relief and

* Some names in this article have been changed.

10. How did Irina benefit from counting her blessings?

11. What helped Kyung-sook to cope with a life-threatening illness?

12. How did Jason find comfort after the loss of his wife?

13. What helped Sheryl to deal with the loss of most of her family?

encouragement to those who needed help. I knew that brothers all around the world were praying for me.” She added: “I am very thankful that Jehovah is my God. He always gives us the things we need.” Yes, being conscious of our blessings is a powerful antidote to being swallowed up by grief. An appreciative heart helps us to go on despite any distressing events that we may face.—Eph. 5:20; **read Philippians 4:6, 7.**

“AS FOR ME, I WILL EXULT IN JEHOVAH”

¹⁴ Throughout history, Jehovah’s people have rejoiced in their blessings. For example, after being delivered from Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea, the Israelites expressed their joy in songs of praise and thanksgiving. (Ex. 15:1-21) Today, among our most treasured blessings is our sure hope of deliverance from everything that causes us pain and distress. (Ps. 37:9-11; Isa. 25:8; 33:24) Imagine how we will feel when Jehovah crushes all his enemies and welcomes us into a new world of peace and righteousness. What a day for

14. What exciting prospect awaits us? (See opening image.)

thanksgiving that will be!—Rev. 20:1-3; 21:3, 4.

¹⁵ We look forward to receiving countless spiritual blessings from Jehovah during 2015. Of course, we may also experience some trials. Whatever may come, we know that Jehovah will never abandon us. (Deut. 31:8; Ps. 9:9, 10) He will continue to provide everything we need to serve him faithfully. Therefore, may we be determined to maintain a spirit like that of the prophet Habakkuk, who said: “Although the fig tree may not blossom, and there may be no fruit on the vines; although the olive crop may fail, and the fields may produce no food; although the flock may disappear from the pen, and there may be no cattle in the stalls; yet, as for me, I will exult in Jehovah; I will be joyful in the God of my salvation.” (Hab. 3:17, 18) Yes, throughout the coming year, may we reflect joyfully on our blessings and be moved to follow the admonition of our 2015 year-text: “Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good.”—Ps. 106:1.

15. What are you determined to do throughout 2015?



**“I am very thankful
that Jehovah is
my God.”**

—Sheryl

With her surviving brother, John
(See paragraph 13)



Why We Observe the Lord's Evening Meal

"Keep doing this in remembrance of me."

—1 COR. 11:24.

NIGHT has fallen, but a full moon bathes Jerusalem in soft light. It is the evening of Nisan 14, 33 C.E. Jesus and his apostles have celebrated the Passover, commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage 15 centuries earlier. With 11 loyal apostles, Jesus now institutes a special meal—one that will memorialize the death he will experience before this day ends.*—Matt. 26:1, 2.

² Jesus says a blessing and passes unleavened bread to the apostles, saying: "Take, eat." He takes a cup of wine, again offers thanks, and says: "Drink out of it, all of you." (Matt. 26: 26, 27) Jesus will not pass other food items to them, but he will have much more to tell his faithful followers on this momentous night.

³ So it was that Jesus instituted the Memorial of his

* To the Hebrews, the day began at sunset and ended at the next sunset.

1, 2. What did Jesus do on the evening of Nisan 14, 33 C.E.? (See opening image.)

3. This article will deal with what questions?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why should we observe the Lord's Evening Meal?

What are the Memorial emblems, and what do they mean?

How do Christians respond to their God-given hope?

death, also called “the Lord’s Evening Meal.” (1 Cor. 11:20) Regarding it, some might ask: Why commemorate Jesus’ death? What is the meaning of the bread and the wine? How can we prepare for the Memorial? Who should partake? And how do Christians respond to what the Scriptures say about their hope?

WHY WE COMMEMORATE JESUS’ DEATH

⁴ As Adam’s descendants, we inherited sin and death. (Rom. 5:12) No imperfect human can give God a ransom for his life or that of others. (Ps. 49:6-9) By his death, however, Jesus paid the only acceptable ransom price—his perfect body and shed blood. By presenting to God the value of the ransom, Jesus made it possible for us to be delivered from sin and death and to receive the gift of eternal life.—Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22.

⁵ The ransom provision proves that God loves the world of mankind. (John 3:16) Jesus’ sacrifice is evidence that he too loves us. Why, during his prehuman existence as God’s “master worker,” Jesus “was especially fond of the sons of men”! (Prov. 8:30, 31) Gratitude to God and his Son should move us to be present at the commemoration of Jesus’ death, thus obeying the command: “Keep doing this in remembrance of me.”—1 Cor. 11:23-25.

WHAT THE EMBLEMS MEAN

⁶ When instituting the Memorial, Je-

4. Jesus’ death made what possible for us?
5. (a) How do we know that God and Christ love mankind? (b) Why should we be present at the commemoration of Jesus’ death?
6. How should we view the Memorial bread and wine?

sus did not miraculously change the bread and the wine into his literal flesh and blood. Instead, he said of the bread: “This *means* my body.” Regarding the wine, he stated: “This *means* my ‘blood of the covenant,’ which is to be poured out in behalf of many.” (Mark 14:22-24) Clearly, then, the bread and the wine were to be viewed as symbols, or emblems.

⁷ On that highly important occasion in 33 C.E., Jesus used unleavened bread left over from the Passover meal. (Ex. 12:8) In the Scriptures, leaven at times denotes corruption or sin. (Matt. 16:6, 11, 12; Luke 12:1) Thus, Jesus’ use of *unleavened* bread was significant because it fittingly represented his sinless body. (Heb. 7:26) So bread of that kind is used at the Memorial.

⁸ The wine that Jesus used on Nisan 14, 33 C.E., represented Jesus’ blood, as does the Memorial cup of wine today. At Golgotha, a place outside Jerusalem, his blood was poured out “for forgiveness of sins.” (Matt. 26:28; 27:33) Because the Memorial bread and wine symbolize Jesus’ priceless sacrifice offered in behalf of obedient mankind and we appreciate that loving provision, it is appropriate that we personally prepare for the annual observance of the Lord’s Evening Meal.

SOME WAYS TO PREPARE

⁹ By keeping up with the Memorial Bi-

7. What is represented by the bread used at the Memorial?
8. What is represented by the Memorial cup of wine?
9. (a) Why is it important to keep up with the Memorial Bible reading? (b) How do you feel about the ransom?

Use the tools provided
to prepare your heart
for the Memorial
(See paragraph 9)



ble reading schedule found in *Examining the Scriptures Daily*, we can meditate on what Jesus did just before his death. In turn, this can help us to prepare our heart for the Lord's Evening Meal.* "We look forward to the Memorial," wrote one sister. "It becomes more special each year. I remember standing in the funeral home . . . looking at my dear dad and coming to a true heartfelt appreciation for the ransom. . . . Oh, I knew all the scriptures and how to explain them! But only when I felt the cold reality of death did my heart fairly leap with joy over what will be accomplished for us by means of that precious ransom." Indeed, when preparing for the Memorial, we do well to reflect on how Jesus' sacrifice liberates us from the scourge of sin and death.

¹⁰ Preparing for the Memorial might include plans to increase our ministry in some way, perhaps as auxiliary pioneers during the Memorial season. As we in-

* See Appendix B12 in the *New World Translation*.

10. How might preparation for the Memorial affect our ministry?

vite Bible students and others to the Lord's Evening Meal, we will find joy in speaking about God, his Son, and the blessings that are in store for those who please Jehovah and praise him.—Ps. 148: 12, 13.

¹¹ As you prepare for the Lord's Evening Meal, consider what the apostle Paul wrote to the Christian congregation in Corinth. (**Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-34.**) Paul pointed out that anyone who partakes of the loaf and drinks from the cup unworthily is "guilty respecting the body and the blood of the Lord," Jesus Christ. So an anointed one should "approve himself after scrutiny" and only then partake of the emblems. Otherwise, he "eats and drinks judgment against himself." Because of improper conduct, many of the Corinthians were "weak and sick, and quite a few [were] sleeping in [spiritual] death." Possibly, some ate and drank so much before or during the Memorial that they were neither mentally nor spiritually alert. Partaking of the emblems

11. How did some Corinthians partake of the Memorial emblems unworthily?

in such an unworthy manner brought God's disapproval on them.

¹² Paul compared the Memorial to a meal shared with others, and he warned partakers: "You cannot be drinking the cup of Jehovah and the cup of demons; you cannot be partaking of 'the table of Jehovah' and the table of demons." (1 Cor. 10:16-21) If a person who partakes of the emblems at the Lord's Evening Meal has committed a serious sin, he should seek spiritual assistance. **(Read James 5:14-16.)** If such an anointed one has produced "fruits that befit repentance," then he is not showing contempt for Jesus' sacrifice by partaking of the Memorial emblems.—Luke 3:8.

¹³ As we personally prepare for the Memorial, we would find it beneficial to give prayerful thought to our God-given hope. No dedicated servant of Jehovah and faithful follower of his Son would want to show disrespect for Jesus' sacrifice by partaking of the Memorial emblems if he or she actually lacks clear evidence of being an anointed Christian. Therefore, how can one determine whether to partake of the emblems or not?

WHO SHOULD PARTAKE?

¹⁴ Those who rightly partake of the Memorial emblems are absolutely sure that they are parties to the new covenant. Regarding the wine, Jesus said: "This cup means the *new covenant* by vir-

tue of my blood." (1 Cor. 11:25) Through the prophet Jeremiah, God foretold that He would make a new covenant that differed from the Law covenant made with the Israelites. **(Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.)** God has made the new covenant with the spiritual Israelites. (Gal. 6:15, 16) This covenant has been validated by Christ's sacrifice and has been made operative by his shed blood. (Luke 22:20) Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant, and loyal anointed ones taken into it receive a heavenly inheritance.—Heb. 8:6; 9:15.

¹⁵ Individuals entitled to partake of the Memorial emblems know that they have been taken into the Kingdom covenant. **(Read Luke 12:32.)** Those who became Jesus' anointed followers and loyally stuck with Jesus, sharing in his sufferings, were to share his heavenly rule. (Phil. 3:10) Because they are in the Kingdom covenant, faithful anointed ones will reign with Christ as heavenly kings forever. (Rev. 22:5) Such individuals rightly partake of the emblems during the Lord's Evening Meal.

¹⁶ Only those who have the witness of the spirit that they are God's children should partake of the Memorial emblems. **(Read Romans 8:15-17.)** Note that Paul used the Aramaic word "*Abba*," which means "O Father!" A child might use this word when addressing his father, for it is a term of endearment that combines the intimacy of "papa" with the respectful word "father." Those who have received "a spirit of adoption as

12. (a) To what did Paul compare the Memorial, and what warning did he give partakers? (b) What should a partaker who has committed a serious sin do?

13. Why would it be beneficial to pray about our God-given hope?

14. What bearing does the new covenant have on the partaking of the Memorial emblems?

15. Who have been taken into the Kingdom covenant, and what privilege awaits them if they are faithful?

16. Briefly explain the meaning of Romans 8:15-17.

sons” are God’s spirit-begotten children. His spirit bears witness with their spirit, giving them the realization that they are Jehovah’s anointed sons. It is not simply a matter of their losing interest in living on earth. They are certain that they will be Jesus’ joint heirs in the heavenly Kingdom if they are faithful to death. Today, there is only a remnant of the 144,000 footstep followers of Christ, who “have an anointing from the holy one,” Jehovah. (1 John 2:20; Rev. 14:1) It is by means of his spirit that they cry out, “*Abba, Father!*” What a blessed relationship they have with God!

RESPONDING TO YOUR SCRIPTURAL HOPE

¹⁷ If you are an anointed Christian, the heavenly hope is an important subject of your personal prayers. When the Bible speaks of being ‘promised in marriage’ to the heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, you apply that to yourself, and you look forward to being part of Christ’s “bride.” (2 Cor. 11:2; John 3:27-29; Rev. 21:2, 9-14) When God in his Word expresses his love for his spiritual children, you respond, “That means me.” And when Jehovah’s Word gives instructions to his anointed sons, holy spirit moves you to obey and to say in your heart, “That applies to me.” God’s spirit and your spirit thus join in bearing witness that you have the heavenly hope.

¹⁸ On the other hand, if you are part of the “great crowd” of “other sheep,” God has given you the earthly hope. (Rev. 7:9; John 10:16) You want to live forever in Paradise, and you find joy in meditating

on what the Bible says about future life on earth. You look forward to enjoying abundant peace while surrounded by your family and other righteous ones. You eagerly await the time when food shortages, poverty, suffering, sickness, and death no longer plague mankind. (Ps. 37:10, 11, 29; 67:6; 72:7, 16; Isa. 33:24) You yearn to welcome those who are resurrected from the dead with the prospect of living forever on earth. (John 5:28, 29) How thankful you are that Jehovah has blessed you with the earthly hope! Though you do not partake of the emblems, you attend the Memorial as an expression of your appreciation for the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

WILL YOU BE PRESENT?

¹⁹ Whether your hope is earthly or heavenly, it can become a reality only if you exercise faith in Jehovah God, Jesus Christ, and the ransom. By attending the Memorial, you will have an opportunity to reflect on your hope and on the great importance of Jesus’ death. So make it your aim to be one of the millions who will attend the Lord’s Evening Meal after sunset on Friday, April 3, 2015, at Kingdom Halls and other locations around the world.

²⁰ Attending the Memorial may deepen your gratitude for Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. Listening attentively to the discourse may move you to show love for your neighbors by sharing with them what you have learned about Jehovah’s love and his grand purpose for mankind. (Matt. 22:34-40) By all means, be present at the Lord’s Evening Meal.

17. What is the hope of anointed ones, and how do they view it?

18. The “other sheep” have what hope, and how do you feel about it?

19, 20. (a) How can your God-given hope become a reality? (b) Why will you attend the Lord’s Evening Meal?



Build a Strong and Happy Marriage

“Unless Jehovah builds the house, it is in vain that its builders work hard on it.”—PS. 127:1a.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

What challenges do married couples face?

How can a couple include Jehovah in their marriage?

How can husbands and wives apply the Golden Rule?

“IF YOU put forth sincere effort and show that you want your marriage to succeed, you can enjoy Jehovah’s blessing,” says a husband who has been happily married for 38 years. Yes, husbands and wives have the potential for enjoying happy times as well as for supporting each other through difficult times.—Prov. 18:22.

² It is not unusual, however, for married couples to experience some “tribulation in their flesh.” (1 Cor. 7:28) Why? Simply dealing with everyday troubles can strain marital ties. Hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and miscommunications caused by the imperfect tongue can be a challenge in the best of marriages. (Jas. 3:2, 5, 8) Many couples also have difficulty in coping with demanding employment while caring for children. Stress and exhaustion make it difficult for some couples to take the time they need in order to strengthen their marriage. Their love and respect for each other may be eroded by financial difficulties, health problems, or other hardships. Furthermore, the foundation of what seemed to be a strong marriage can be undermined by “the works of

1-3. What challenges do married couples face? (See opening image.)

the flesh,” such as sexual immorality, brazen conduct, hostility, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, and dissensions.—Gal. 5:19-21.

³ To compound matters, “the last days” are characterized by selfish, ungodly attitudes that are toxic to a marriage. (2 Tim. 3:1-4) Finally, marriages have to withstand the determined onslaughts of a malicious enemy. The apostle Peter warns us: “Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone.” —1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:12.

⁴ A husband in Japan admits: “I was under a lot of stress financially. And because I didn’t really communicate with my wife, she also came under a lot of pressure. In addition, she recently experienced serious health problems. At times, this stress caused us to clash.” Some challenges in a marriage are inevitable, but they are not insurmountable. With Jehovah’s help, couples can enjoy a solid and happy union. **(Read Psalm 127:1.)** Let us discuss five of the spiritual building blocks for a strong and lasting marriage. Then we will consider how these building blocks can be cemented by love.

INCLUDE JEHOVAH IN YOUR MARRIAGE

⁵ The cornerstone of a secure marriage is loyalty and submission to the One who instituted marriage. **(Read Ecclesiastes 4:12.)** Husbands and wives can include Jehovah in their marriage by following his loving guidance. The

4. How is it possible to have a strong and happy marriage?

5, 6. What can husbands and wives do to include Jehovah in their marriage?

Bible says about God’s ancient people: “Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying, ‘This is the way. Walk in it,’ in case you should go to the right or in case you should go to the left.” (Isa. 30:20, 21) Today, couples can “hear” Jehovah’s word by reading God’s Word together. (Ps. 1:1-3) They can further strengthen their marriage by means of a Family Worship program that is both enjoyable and spiritually refreshing. Daily prayer together is also invaluable in building a marriage that can withstand the onslaughts of Satan’s world.

⁶ “Whenever our joy has been clouded by personal difficulties or misunderstandings,” says Gerhard in Germany, “the counsel from God’s Word has helped us to develop patience and practice forgiveness. These qualities are indispensable in a successful marriage.” When couples work hard to keep God in their marriage by engaging in spiritual activities together, they are bonded to God and to each other in a close and happy union.

HUSBANDS

—EXERCISE LOVING HEADSHIP

⁷ How a husband exercises his headship can do much to build a strong and happy marriage. The Bible states: “The head of every man is the Christ; in turn, the head of a woman is the man.” (1 Cor. 11:3) The context of that statement tells husbands how they should exercise their headship—in the same way that Christ exercises his authority over man. Jesus was never tyrannical or harsh but was always loving, kind,

7. How should husbands exercise their headship?

reasonable, mild-tempered, and lowly in heart.—Matt. 11:28-30.

⁸ Christian husbands do not need to demand repeatedly that their wives show them respect. Rather, they “continue dwelling with them according to knowledge [showing them consideration; understanding them, ftn.].” They “assign them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one.” (1 Pet. 3:7) In public and in private, husbands show by their respectful words and compassionate actions that their wives are precious to them. (Prov. 31:28) Such loving headship wins a wife’s love and respect and brings God’s blessing on the marriage.

WIVES **—SHOW HUMBLE SUBMISSION**

⁹ Unselfish, principled love for Jehovah helps all of us to humble ourselves

8. How can a husband win his wife’s love and respect?
9. How can a wife show humble submission?

under his mighty hand. (1 Pet. 5:6) One important way that a submissive wife shows respect for Jehovah’s authority is by being cooperative and supportive within the family circle. The Bible says: “You wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as it is becoming in the Lord.” (Col. 3:18) Realistically, not all of a husband’s decisions will be to his wife’s liking. Yet, if his decisions do not conflict with God’s laws, a submissive wife is willing to yield.—1 Pet. 3:1.

¹⁰ A wife has an honorable place as her husband’s “partner.” (Mal. 2:14) She provides valuable input concerning family decisions by respectfully expressing her thoughts and feelings yet remaining submissive. A wise husband will listen carefully to his wife’s expressions. (Prov. 31:10-31) Loving submission, in turn, promotes joy, peace, and harmony within the family, and gives husbands and wives the satisfaction

10. Why is loving submission important?

By doing spiritual things together,
couples are bonded to God and to each
other in a close and happy union
(See paragraphs 5, 6)



that comes from knowing that they are pleasing God.—Eph. 5:22.

KEEP FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER FREELY

¹¹ One of the crucial building blocks of an enduring marriage is forgiveness. The marital union is strengthened when husbands and wives “continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely.” (Col. 3:13) On the other hand, the marriage relationship is undermined when a couple keep a mental record of old grudges and often use them as ammunition for fresh attacks. Just as cracks can weaken a building, grievances and resentment can develop in our heart, making it increasingly difficult to be forgiving. By contrast, strong marriage bonds are forged when husband and wife treat each other in a forgiving way, as Jehovah treats them.—Mic. 7:18, 19.

¹² True love “does not keep account of wrongs.” In fact, “love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Cor. 13:4, 5, *ftn.*; **read 1 Peter 4:8.**) In other words, love does not put a limit on the number of sins that we can forgive. When the apostle Peter asked how many times he should forgive someone, Jesus replied: “Up to 77 times.” (Matt. 18:21, 22) He was showing that there is virtually no limit to the number of times a Christian should forgive others.—Prov. 10:12.*

* While couples try to forgive and to work out their difficulties, the Bible allows an innocent mate the right to decide whether to forgive or to divorce an adulterous spouse. (Matt. 19:9) See the article “The Bible’s Viewpoint: Adultery—To Forgive or Not to Forgive?” in the August 8, 1995, issue of *Awake!*

11. Why is forgiveness essential?

12. How does love cover “a multitude of sins”?

¹³ “If a couple do not want to be forgiving,” says Annette, “resentment and mistrust grow, and that is poison to a marriage. Being forgiving strengthens the bonds of marriage and draws you closer together.” To counteract a tendency to be unforgiving, work on having a thankful and appreciative disposition. Make a practice of giving your spouse sincere commendation. (Col. 3:15) Experience the peace of mind, unity, and divine blessings that come to those who have a forgiving disposition.—Rom. 14:19.

APPLY THE GOLDEN RULE

¹⁴ No doubt you like to be treated with dignity and respect. You appreciate it when your thoughts are acknowledged and your feelings are taken into account. But have you ever heard someone say, “I will give him a taste of his own medicine”? While such a reaction might at times be understandable, the Bible tells us: “*Do not say: ‘I will do to him just as he has done to me.’*” (Prov. 24:29) In fact, Jesus recommended a more positive way of handling difficult situations. This rule of conduct is so well-known that it is often called the Golden Rule: “Just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them.” (Luke 6:31) Jesus meant that we should treat people the way we would *like* to be treated and not repay unkindness with unkindness. In marriage, it means that we need to put into the relationship what we hope to get out of it.

¹⁵ Married people strengthen their

13. How can we counteract a tendency to be unforgiving?

14, 15. What is the Golden Rule, and how is it of practical value in a marriage?

relationship when they are sensitive to their mate's feelings. "We have tried to put the Golden Rule into practice," says a husband in South Africa. "True, there are times when we're upset, but we have worked hard to treat each other the way we would like to be treated—with respect and dignity."

¹⁶ Do not expose your mate's weaknesses or harp on his idiosyncrasies—not even jokingly. Remember that marriage is not a competition to find out who is stronger, who can shout louder, or who can think of the most cutting remark. True, we all have flaws, and sometimes we upset others. But there is never a justifiable reason for either a husband or a wife to use sarcastic and demeaning speech, or worse, to shove or hit each other.—**Read Proverbs 17:27; 31:26.**

¹⁷ Even though in some cultures men who bully or hit their wives are viewed as manly, the Bible states: "The one slow to anger is *better* than a mighty man, and the one controlling his temper than one conquering a city." (Prov. 16:32) It takes great moral strength to imitate the greatest man who ever lived, Jesus Christ, and to control one's spirit. A man who verbally or physically abuses his wife is anything but manly, and he will lose his relationship with Jehovah. The psalmist David, who himself was a strong and courageous man, said: "Be agitated, but do not sin. Have your say in your heart, upon your bed, and keep silent."—Ps. 4:4.

16. What should marriage partners not do to each other?

17. How can husbands live by the Golden Rule?

"CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH LOVE"

¹⁸ **Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.** Love is the most important quality in a marriage. "Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, humility, mildness, and patience. But besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union." (Col. 3:12, 14) Self-sacrificing, Christlike love is the mortar that binds the building blocks of a sturdy marital union. It makes the marriage unbreakable in the face of irritating personality flaws, daunting health challenges, distressing financial crises, and challenging in-law issues.

¹⁹ True, it takes loving devotion, loyal commitment, and earnest effort to make a marriage succeed. Rather than abandoning the marriage when difficulties arise, marriage partners should be determined to make their relationship thrive—not just survive. Christian couples who are devoted to Jehovah and to each other are motivated by their love for God and for each other to resolve their difficulties, for "love never fails."—1 Cor. 13:8; Matt. 19:5, 6; Heb. 13:4.

²⁰ Building a strong and happy marriage is particularly challenging in the "critical times" in which we live. (2 Tim. 3:1) But with Jehovah's help, it is possible. Still, couples also have to contend with the world's rampant moral decay. The following article will consider what husbands and wives can do to fortify the spiritual defenses of their marriage.

18. Why is it important to keep cultivating the quality of love?

19, 20. (a) How can couples successfully build a strong and happy marriage? (b) What will we consider in the next article?



Let Jehovah Fortify and Safeguard Your Marriage

“Unless Jehovah guards the city, it is in vain that the guard stays awake.”—PS. 127:1b.

SHORTLY before the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land, tens of thousands of men committed “sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab.” As a result, 24,000 perished at Jehovah’s hand. Imagine—the Israelites were so close to the realization of their long-awaited inheritance, yet they lost out on wonderful blessings because of succumbing to temptation. —Num. 25:1-5, 9.

² That disastrous example was recorded “for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have come.” (1 Cor. 10:6-11) Now in the final part of “the last days,” God’s servants are on the threshold of a righteous new world. (2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:13) Sadly, though, some of Jehovah’s worshippers have let down their guard. They have been ensnared by immorality and have reaped the bitter consequences of immoral conduct. Such ones run the risk of losing out on eternal blessings.

³ Because of today’s scourge of immorality, husbands and

- 1, 2. (a) Why did 24,000 Israelites lose out on wonderful blessings?
(b) Why is that ancient event significant for us?
3. Why do married couples need Jehovah’s direction and protection? (See opening image.)

CAN YOU ANSWER?

Why do we need to safeguard our heart?

Why should we keep drawing close to God?

What kind of communication strengthens a marriage?

wives need Jehovah's direction and protection so that their efforts to safeguard their marriage will not be in vain. (**Read Psalm 127:1.**) We will discuss how a couple can fortify their marriage by guarding their heart, drawing close to God, putting on the new personality, maintaining meaningful communication, and rendering the marriage due.

GUARD YOUR HEART

⁴ How is it possible for a Christian to be drawn into immoral conduct? The disastrous path of immorality often starts with the eyes. Jesus explained: "Everyone who keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:27, 28; 2 Pet. 2:14) Many Christians who have fallen into wrongdoing have weakened their moral defenses by viewing pornography, reading erotic literature, or watching lurid material on the Internet. Others have allowed themselves to be entertained by sexually explicit movies, stage shows, or television programs. Some have visited nightclubs and strip shows or have gone to massage parlors for sensual massages.

⁵ Some succumb to temptation because they turn to the wrong person for attention. In a world that lacks restraint and that thrives on every sort of immorality, it is all too easy for a deceitful and desperate heart to spawn romantic feelings for someone other than a marriage mate. (**Read Jeremiah 17:9, 10.**) Jesus said: "Out of the heart come wicked reasonings, murders, adulteries, sexual immorality."—Matt. 15:19.

4. What has led some Christians into wrongdoing?

5. Why do we need to safeguard our heart?

⁶ Once illicit desires take root in their treacherous hearts, two people who are attracted to each other may find themselves discussing matters that they should be sharing only with their spouse. Soon, they create more and more opportunities to be together, and seemingly innocent and ostensibly accidental encounters become more frequent. As their feelings become more intense, their moral defenses weaken. The further they go down a sinful path, the more difficult it is to stop, even though they know that what they are doing is wrong.—Prov. 7:21, 22.

⁷ Spiritual fortifications progressively crumble as wrong desires and speech lead to holding hands, kissing, caressing, passion-arousing heavy petting, and other expressions of affection, all of which should be given only to their marriage mates. Ultimately, they are "drawn out and enticed ["caught as by bait," ftn.] by [their] own desire." When the desire has become fertile, it "gives birth to sin"—in this case, sexual immorality. (Jas. 1:14, 15) How tragic! The entire moral collapse could have been avoided had both individuals allowed Jehovah to fortify their respect for the sanctity of marriage. But how?

KEEP DRAWING CLOSE TO GOD

⁸ **Read Psalm 97:10.** Friendship with Jehovah is a vital source of moral protection. As we learn about God's endearing qualities and we endeavor to "become imitators of God, as beloved children,

6, 7. (a) A deceitful heart can lead a person down what sinful path? (b) How can a moral collapse be avoided?

8. How does friendship with Jehovah provide moral protection?

and go on walking in love,” we will be fortified to reject “sexual immorality and every sort of uncleanness.” (Eph. 5:1-4) Knowing that “God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers,” married couples work hard to let their marriage be honorable and free of defilement.—Heb. 13:4.

⁹ Some of God’s faithful servants have weakened their moral defenses by associating with non-Witness workmates after work hours. Even during work hours, temptations can arise. It was at his workplace that a handsome young man named Joseph realized that his employer’s wife was very attracted to him. Day after day, she tried to seduce him. Eventually, “she grabbed hold of him by his garment and said: ‘Lie down with me!’” But Joseph managed to run away from her. What helped Joseph to keep his spiritual defenses intact under such tempting circumstances? It was his firm resolve not to damage his relationship with God that safeguarded his chastity and integrity. As a result of his resolute stand, he lost his job and was unjustly imprisoned, but Jehovah blessed him. (Gen. 39:1-12; 41:38-43) Whether at work or in a private setting, Christians need to avoid putting themselves in tempting situations with someone other than their marriage mate.

PUT ON THE NEW PERSONALITY

¹⁰ Because the new personality is “created according to God’s will in true

9. (a) How did Joseph resist immoral temptation? (b) What lessons can we learn from Joseph’s example?

10. What moral protection does the new personality provide?

righteousness and loyalty,” it is a vital part of a married couple’s spiritual fortification. (Eph. 4:24) Those who put on this new personality “deaden” their body members “as respects sexual immorality, uncleanness, uncontrolled sexual passion, hurtful desire, and greediness.” (Read **Colossians 3:5, 6.**) The word “deaden” indicates that we must take strong measures to fight against immoral fleshly desires. We will avoid anything that might arouse in us sexual desire for someone other than our mate. (Job 31:1) As we conform our lives to God’s will, we learn to “abhor what is wicked” and “cling to what is good.”—Rom. 12:2, 9.

¹¹ The new personality reflects “the image of the One who created it,” Jehovah himself. (Col. 3:10) What blessings result when husbands and wives fortify their moral defenses by clothing themselves “with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, humility, mildness, and patience”! (Col. 3:12) They also enjoy greater marital harmony when they “let the peace of the Christ control [their] hearts.” (Col. 3:15; ftn.) How rewarding it is for couples to “have tender affection for one another”! It gives them pleasure to “take the initiative” in “showing honor to one another.”—Rom. 12:10; ftn.

¹² When asked what qualities contribute to their happy marriage, Sid said: “Love is the main quality that we’ve always worked on. And we’ve also found *mildness* to be very important.” His wife,

11. How can the new personality strengthen a marriage?

12. What qualities do you consider important for a happy marriage?

Sonja, agrees, and she adds: “*Kindness* is certainly a vital quality. And we have also tried to show *humility*, even though it isn’t always easy.”

MAINTAIN MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION

¹³ Gracious speech is without a doubt one of the keys to marital stability. How sad it would be if marriage mates spoke to each other with less respect than they do to total strangers or even to their pets! When couples lash out with “malicious bitterness, anger, wrath, screaming, and abusive speech,” they erode the spiritual defenses of their marriage. (Eph. 4:31) Instead of undermining their marriage with constant criticism or biting sarcasm, couples need to buttress their relationship with words that are kind, tender, and compassionate.—Eph. 4:32.

¹⁴ The Bible says that there is “a time

to be silent.” (Eccl. 3:7) This does not mean that we should retreat behind a wall of silence, which blocks necessary communication. “Under such circumstances,” says a wife in Germany, “silence can hurt your partner.” However, she adds: “Even though it is not always easy to keep calm under stress, it is not good just to let off steam. Then you impulsively say or do something that can hurt your marriage mate, and that only makes matters worse.” In the long run, a husband and wife do not solve their problems by screaming or by refusing to talk to each other. Instead, they fortify their marriage by choosing not to let disagreements become habitual or deteriorate into protracted arguments.

¹⁵ Marriage bonds are strengthened when couples make time to share feelings and opinions. *How* we say something is as important as *what* we say. Therefore, even in difficult situations,

13. What is a key to marital stability, and why?

14. What actions do we wisely avoid?

15. How can good communication strengthen a marriage?

A husband and a wife can reinforce their marriage with good communication
(See paragraph 15)



endeavor to make what you say gracious, both in your tone of voice and in your choice of words. Thus you will make it easier for your mate to listen to you. **(Read Colossians 4:6.)** A husband and a wife can reinforce their marriage with good communication by saying “only what is good for building up as the need may be, to impart what is beneficial” to their spouse.—Eph. 4:29.

RENDER THE MARRIAGE DUE

¹⁶ Couples can also forge a strong marriage bond when they seek their mate’s advantage, putting their spouse’s personal interest ahead of their own. (Phil. 2:3, 4) Husbands as well as wives need to be sensitive to the emotional and sexual needs of their mate.—**Read 1 Corinthians 7:3, 4.**

¹⁷ Regrettably, some marriage mates hold back from being affectionate or sharing sexual intimacies, and some men tend to view tenderness as unmanly. The Bible says: “You husbands should try to understand the wives you live with.” (1 Pet. 3:7, *Phillips*) A husband needs to understand that the marriage due involves more than just physical union. A wife is more likely to enjoy marital intimacies if her husband is loving and affectionate at times other than when they have intercourse. When both show loving consideration, they are more likely to satisfy each other’s emotional and physical needs.

¹⁸ Although there is no excuse for

16, 17. Why is it important for marriage mates to be sensitive to each other’s emotional and sexual needs?

18. How can husbands and wives strengthen their marriage bond?

marital unfaithfulness, a lack of tenderness could contribute to a spouse’s seeking affection and intimacy from someone else. (Prov. 5:18; Eccl. 9:9) Therefore, the Bible urges married couples: “Do not deprive each other [of the marriage due] except by mutual consent for an appointed time.” Why? “In order that Satan may not keep tempting you for your lack of self-control.” (1 Cor. 7:5) What a tragedy if a couple were to allow Satan to exploit their “lack of self-control” and cause either of them to succumb to temptation and commit adultery! Conversely, when each mate seeks, “not his own advantage, but that of the other person” and renders the marriage due as an expression of love rather than as a duty, affectionate intimate relations can strengthen the marriage bond.—1 Cor. 10:24.

KEEP SAFEGUARDING YOUR MARRIAGE

¹⁹ We are at the threshold of the righteous new earth. That is why giving in to fleshly desires can be as disastrous for us as it was for the 24,000 Israelites on the Plains of Moab. After describing that shameful and tragic event, God’s Word cautions: “Let the one who thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall.” (1 Cor. 10:12) How vital it is, therefore, that we fortify our marriage by remaining faithful to our heavenly Father and to our spouse. (Matt. 19:5, 6) Now more than ever, we need to “do [our] utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace.”—2 Pet. 3:13, 14.

19. What should we be resolved to do, and why?



Is Unfailing Love Possible?

"[Love's] flames are a blazing fire, the flame of Jah."

—SONG OF SOL. 8:6.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why is true love between a man and a woman possible?

What can married Christians learn from the Song of Solomon?

What can single Christians learn about courtship and choosing a mate?

'HOW warmly they exchange glances and tenderly hold each other! Who can deny that they are deeply in love!' These thoughts go through the mind of an elder who has just officiated at the couple's wedding. As the newlyweds gracefully move across the dance floor at the reception, he cannot help but wonder: 'Will their marriage stand the test of time? As the years go by, will their love deepen or will it take wings and fly away?' When it proves to be unswerving and enduring, the love between a man and a woman can truly be beautiful. In view of so many marriage breakups, however, it is not unreasonable to ask if lasting love is really possible.

² True love was rare even in the days of King Solomon of ancient Israel. Commenting on the moral climate of his day, Solomon wrote: "One upright man out of a thousand I found, but a woman among them I have not found. This alone I have found: The true God made mankind upright, but they have sought out many schemes." (Eccl. 7:26-29, ftn.) Largely as a result of the influence of foreign women who practiced Baal worship, moral standards had dropped so low in his day that Solomon found it difficult to find a man or a woman with

1, 2. Who can benefit from a careful consideration of the Song of Solomon, and why? (See opening image.)

good morals.* Still, the poem he wrote some 20 years earlier, the Song of Solomon, shows that enduring love can exist between a man and a woman. It also vividly portrays what that love is like and how it is displayed. Both married and single worshippers of Jehovah can learn much about such love by carefully considering this Bible book.

TRUE LOVE IS POSSIBLE!

³ **Read Song of Solomon 8:6.** The expression “the flame of Jah” that is used to describe love speaks volumes. True love is “the flame of Jah” in that Jehovah is the Originator of such love. He created man in his image with the ability to love. (Gen. 1:26, 27) When God presented the first woman, Eve, to the first man, Adam, the words that came out of Adam’s mouth were nothing short of poetic. No doubt Eve felt a closeness to Adam, from whom “she was taken.” (Gen. 2:21-23) Since Jehovah has given humans the capacity for showing love, it is possible for a man and a woman to have unswerving and unfailing love for each other.

⁴ The love between the opposite sexes has other characteristics besides its potential for being constant and enduring. Some of these are wonderfully portrayed in the Song of Solomon. Written as a song similar to the libretto, or text of an opera, the story is about the love between a young woman from the village of Shunem, or Shulem, and her be-

loved shepherd. The girl is brought into Solomon’s camp because her beauty attracted Solomon, who was camping near the vineyards she was guarding. However, right from the outset, it is clear that she is in love with the shepherd. As Solomon attempts to win her over, the girl freely expresses her longing to be with her beloved. (Song of Sol. 1:4-14) The shepherd finds his way into the camp, and beautiful expressions of endearment are exchanged.—Song of Sol. 1:15–17.

⁵ Solomon returns to Jerusalem, taking the young woman with him; the shepherd follows her. (Song of Sol. 4: 1-5, 8, 9) All of Solomon’s efforts to win the girl’s love prove fruitless. (Song of Sol. 6:4-7; 7:1-10) Finally, the king permits her to return home. The song closes with the girl desiring her dear one to “be swift like a gazelle” and come running to her.—Song of Sol. 8:14.

⁶ As meaningful and beautifully composed as Solomon’s “song of songs” is, identifying the speakers of the dialogues, soliloquies, and dreams in the song is not without its challenges. (Song of Sol. 1:1) According to *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, “things like plot, story, narrative development, and character are not really of prime interest.” So as not to distract from the lyrical and poetic natures of the composition, the names of the speakers may have been left out. Still, the matter of who says what can be determined by what is being said by them or to them.*

* See *The Watchtower*, January 15, 2007, page 31.

3. Why is true love between a man and a woman possible?

4, 5. Briefly relate the story of the Song of Solomon.

* See the “Outline of Contents” of the Song of Solomon in the *New World Translation*, pages 926-927.

6. Why is it a challenge to identify the speakers in the drama?

“YOUR EXPRESSIONS OF AFFECTION ARE BETTER THAN WINE”

⁷ The Song of Solomon abounds in “expressions of affection” between the young woman and the shepherd. Even though the expressions reflect the Oriental setting of some 3,000 years ago and may appear strange to today’s readers, they are full of meaning, and the feelings they convey are not foreign to us. For example, the shepherd praises the maiden’s soft and gentle eyes by comparing them to “those of doves.” (Song of Sol. 1:15) She likens his eyes, not to doves’ eyes, but to doves themselves. **(Read Song of Solomon 5:12.)** The dark iris surrounded by white appeared as beautiful to her as a dove bathing in milk.

⁸ Not all expressions of affection made in the song draw attention to physical beauty. Consider what the shepherd says about the young woman’s speech. **(Read Song of Solomon 4: 7, 11.)** Her lips are said to “drip with comb honey.” Why? Because comb honey is sweeter and more flavorful than honey that has been exposed to air. “Honey and milk are under [her] tongue,” meaning that like honey and milk, her speech is pleasant and good. Clearly, when the shepherd says to the girl, “you are altogether beautiful, . . . there is no blemish in you,” he has more than her physical beauty in mind.

⁹ The marriage arrangement is not a mere contract or a formal agreement

empty of love and affection. In fact, love is a hallmark of a Christian marriage. But what type of love is this? Is it love governed by Bible principles? (1 John 4:8) Does it involve natural affection—the kind that family members have toward one another? Does this love consist of warm and tender attachment as found between true friends? (John 11:3) Is it romantic love? (Prov. 5:15-20) Actually, the true and abiding love between marriage mates includes all of them. Love is best sensed when it is expressed. How vital that marriage mates not allow the activities of daily life to rob them of exchanging expressions of affection! Such expressions can contribute much to the security and happiness experienced within a marriage. In those cultures where marriages are often arranged and the man and woman hardly know each other before the wedding day, their being conscious of the need to express love verbally to each other will help love to grow and the marriage to flourish.

¹⁰ Expressions of affection between marriage mates have another positive effect. King Solomon offered to make for the Shulammite girl “gold ornaments studded with silver.” He showered her with praise, saying that she was “as beautiful as the full moon, as pure as the sunlight.” (Song of Sol. 1:9-11; 6:10) But the young woman remained loyal to her beloved shepherd. What strengthened and comforted her during their separation? She tells us. **(Read Song of Solomon 1:2, 3.)** It was the memory of the shepherd’s “expressions of affection.”

^{10.} What effect can the memory of expressions of affection have?

7, 8. What can be said about the “expressions of affection” found in the Song of Solomon? Give examples.

9. (a) What does the love between marriage mates entail? (b) Why is it important that marriage mates exchange expressions of affection?

Christians refrain from developing a romantic interest in unbelievers
(See paragraph 14)



For her, they proved to be “better than wine” that makes the heart rejoice, and his name was as soothing as “fragrant oil poured out” on the head. (Ps. 23:5; 104:15) Yes, the pleasant memory of love that has been expressed can enhance the enduring quality of love. How important it is that marriage mates express their affection for each other often!

**DO NOT AWAKEN LOVE
“UNTIL IT FEELS INCLINED”**

¹¹ The Song of Solomon also provides lessons for unmarried Christians, especially for those looking for a mate. The young woman felt no love for Solomon. Putting the daughters of Jerusalem under oath, she said: “Do not try to awaken or arouse love in me until it feels inclined.” (Song of Sol. 2:7; 3:5) Why? Because it is simply not proper to develop a romantic attachment for just anyone who comes along. A Christian desiring to marry, then, is wise to wait patiently for the one he or she can truly love.

11. What can unmarried Christians learn from the Shulammite girl’s putting others under oath not to try to awaken love in her?

¹² Why did the Shulammite girl love the shepherd? True, he was handsome, resembling “a gazelle”; his hands were strong like “cylinders of gold”; and his legs were beautiful and strong like “pillars of marble.” But he was more than just strong and handsome. “Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest” was her “dear one among the sons.” For a girl who was faithful to Jehovah to feel this way about the man, he had to have been spiritually inclined.—Song of Sol. 2:3, 9; 5:14, 15.

¹³ What about the Shulammite girl? Though she was beautiful enough to attract the attention of a king who at the time had “60 queens and 80 concubines and young women without number,” she viewed herself as “but a saffron of the coastal plain”—a common flower. The girl was remarkably modest and humble. No wonder she was “like a lily among thorns,” anything but common to the shepherd! She was faithful to Jehovah.—Song of Sol. 2:1, 2; 6:8.

12. Why did the Shulammite girl love the shepherd?

13. Why did the shepherd love the young woman?

¹⁴ In the Scriptures, powerful admonition is given to Christians to marry “only in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 7:39) A single person who wants to marry refrains from forming romantic ties with unbelievers and looks for a mate only among loyal worshippers of Jehovah. Moreover, to face life’s realities while maintaining marital peace and spiritual unity calls for faith in and devotion to God—desirable qualities to look for in a prospective marriage mate. Those are the very qualities that the shepherd and the young woman found in each other.

MY BRIDE “IS LIKE A LOCKED GARDEN”

¹⁵ **Read Song of Solomon 4:12.** Why does the shepherd describe his beloved as “a locked garden”? A walled or fenced-in garden is not open to the public. It can be accessed only through a locked gate. The Shulammite girl is like that garden because her affection was available only to her husband-to-be—the shepherd. By not giving in to the enticements of the king, she proved herself to be like “a wall” and not “a door” that swings wide open. (Song of Sol. 8:8-10) Similarly, godly unmarried men and women reserve their love and affection for their future mate.

14. What does the love portrayed in the Song of Solomon teach single Christians who want to marry?

15. How may the Shulammite girl serve as an example to unmarried godly men and women?

¹⁶ When the shepherd asked the Shulammite girl to go for a walk with him on a spring day, her brothers did not permit her to go. Instead, they assigned her the work of guarding the vineyards. Why? Did they not trust her? Did they perhaps think that she had immoral intentions? Actually, they were taking precautions so that their sister would not come into a tempting situation. (Song of Sol. 1:6; 2:10-15) Here, then, is a lesson for single Christians: During courtship, take necessary precautions to keep the relationship chaste. Avoid secluded places. While clean expressions of affection may be appropriate, be careful to avoid tempting situations.

¹⁷ Christian couples generally enter the marital relationship with much love and affection for each other. Since the marriage arrangement instituted by Jehovah is a lasting one, it is vital that couples endeavor to keep the flame of their love ablaze and maintain an atmosphere in which love can grow.—Mark 10:6-9.

¹⁸ When looking for a marriage mate, you want to find someone you can truly love and then make that love strong and inextinguishable, as shown in the Song of Solomon. Whether you are seeking a marriage mate or have already entered wedlock, may you experience true love —“the flame of Jah.”—Song of Sol. 8:6.

16. What does the Song of Solomon teach regarding courtship?

17, 18. How have you benefited from considering the Song of Solomon?

